

THE INDEPENDENT

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'The last time I saw this man he was throwing grenades and shooting a pistol at us. Today he meets the Secretary of State.'



Michael Stone (right), the man the author last saw throwing grenades in 1988, and Sam McCrory, in H block number 8 of the Maze yesterday

Photograph by Brian Harris

The last time I saw Michael Stone, in 1988, he was throwing fragmentation grenades and firing a Browning automatic pistol at a crowd of us at a republican funeral in Belfast's Milltown cemetery.

Yesterday he stood in the corridor of H-block number 8 in the Maze prison, evidently a more thoughtful man, and reflected: "It's all about dialogue and that's what we've been pushing. If we can get through the current situation, anything's possible."

Today Stone will be one of four Ulster Defence Association prisoners sitting across the table from Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to tell her of their concerns about the peace process. The unprecedented meeting could be vital in helping persuade loyalists to maintain their three-year ceasefire.

Yesterday the signs were unexpectedly good. The four UDA leaders due to meet Ms Mowlam sat in one of their recreation rooms in the wing which they describe as home, and, far from being warlike, sounded relaxed, open-minded and keen to talk.

"Home" is a gaily-painted wing festooned with UDA and loyalist signs, flags and mottoes. Men in casual clothes strolled along a central corridor, while others lounged in a kitchen and recreation room. From the background came the pounding of disco music. The cells are

homely: prisoners can buy and bring in televisions and hi-fis, and many have wallpapered their cells. "This is where these blokes live," Martin Mogg, the governor, commented.

There is clearly a balance of power in operation here, for no prison officers were on the wing, staying on the other side of a set of bars. But there were two security cameras trained along the corridor, and when the governor ushered reporters into the wing his presence was affably accepted.

The authorities offered to bring in the media because they, the loyalists and IRA prisoners all feel aggrieved at newspaper stories suggesting that prisoners serving sentences for terrorist-type offences live a life of Riley in the Maze.

It is indeed a most peculiar prison, but the governor, the UDA and the IRA all wanted to set the record straight. Asked if prisoners control the wings Mr Mogg answered: "Yes." They run their wings, he explained, while staff had control of everywhere else. Regular searches would be held, he said, and head counts were carried out twice a day.

He and the prisoners took exception to reports that drink and drugs are freely available, that sex takes place on visits, that prisoners have mobile phones, and that they can have cases of wine brought into the jail.

BY DAVID MCKITTRICK

Sam McCrory, the UDA commander, said: "There's no booze, there's no drugs, there's no sex on the visits and we don't have guns. Drugs are totally out of the question. Anybody caught with drugs in any of the UDA wings will be expelled from the organisation and put out of these blocks."

"It's embarrassing and humiliating for our families when they read about sex on the visits, they're taking drugs, they're running about drunk. The majority of people in here are health and fitness fanatics so they're not going to take drugs. Half of them are on fat-free diets or they're vegans."

STRICT SECURITY

Strict security arrangements have been put in place for today's unprecedented visit to a prison where, just two weeks ago, an inmate was shot dead.

While an investigation into the shooting of "King Rat" Billy Wright is continuing, officials are taking no chances with the safety of Mo Mowlam.

"The governor of the Maze, Martin Mogg, has said he can guarantee the safety of the Secretary of State," said a spokesman for the Northern Ireland office. "In addition she will be accompanied by her own team of protection officers from the RUC... she will not be visiting any sensitive areas within the prison." Talks are expected to begin at around 11.30am in a private office and are expected to last for around an hour.

— Andrew Buncombe

a problem in these areas than many other prisons.

McCrory, heavily tattooed, explained life in the jail: "This prison works on a day to day system of cooperation with the management of the prison. We can ask for something and a PO (prison officer) will tell you no. So we ask to see a governor, and we'll sit down and we'll negotiate and we'll come to some sort of arrangement. You might not get what you want but you might get a piece of it."

"But you'll not do it without cooperation, you don't bully these people into it. We've been reading that staff feel under threat from us. Well, we've had three football matches with the prison staff. And afterwards we went into the gym and we had crisps and coke and sandwiches and we all had a good laugh with each other."

The approach is different in the IRA H-block, which is more soberly decorated. On the walls are silhouettes of Che Guevara and some armed men, a notice about international women's year, a pro-Palestinian poster and Irish language material.

Wilson said that people complained about prisoners having access to computers, but said the two in the wing were needed for educational purposes. 50 republicans were doing Open University degrees, five working for master's

degree and two studying for PhDs.

"We live in the real world — there have to be headcounts, there have to be searches," he added. Another IRA leader, Harry Maguire, added: "What we have here is a degree of progressivism, pragmatism and realism." A third, Jim McVeigh, said: "Unpalatable as it may seem, we are prisoners of war. We act as an army, as a disciplined group of men, in a very disciplined and determined manner."

Wilson was very open on the question of IRA escapes: "Unfortunately, from our point of view, since the big escape of 1983 we have only managed to get out one other prisoner. Liam Averill. We very much regret that we have not been able to secure the successful escape of larger numbers of republican prisoners. We see it as our duty."

Back in the UDA block, McCrory was clearly looking forward to meeting Ms Mowlam. "We've our own thoughts, she'll have her own thoughts, we'll get round a table," he said. "It's not a negotiation thing, it's a talk, a conversation and a listening exercise. From Sunday to now we have not stopped — meeting after meeting after meeting. We know the way forward is dialogue. We want a level playing field."

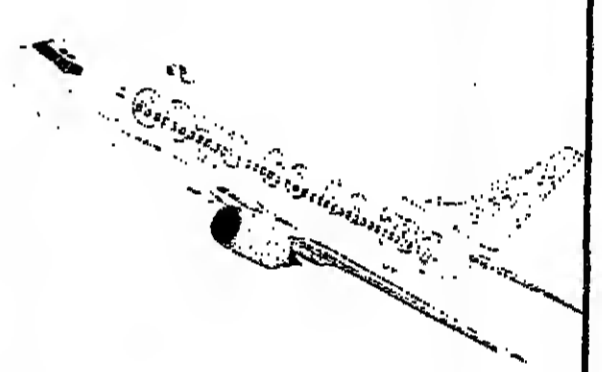
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TODAY'S NEWS

Selsey tornado

Residents of the seaside town of Selsey were coming to terms with the destruction left by a freak tornado, which cut a swathe two miles long and quarter of a mile wide. Chimney stacks were sent crashing, roofs were damaged, tiles sent flying, shop fronts damaged and trees uprooted, but no one was hurt. Page 3

Tenerife cult swoop

Police in the Canary Islands last night stormed the "last supper" of a cult and arrested a German psychologist who they said was planning the collective suicide of 32 followers. Members of the religious sect apparently planned to end their lives in expectation that a spaceship would carry them off from a Tenerife volcano summit. Page 10

Britannia friction

Government plans to save the Royal Yacht Britannia for the nation are descending into legal acrimony. Two London consortiums and a Glaswegian team, angry at not being chosen to provide a home for the yacht, are planning a judicial review of the Government's decision to shortlist Manchester with Leith. Page 3

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COLUMN ONE

Curing the millennium bug could become an inside job for hackers

Here's the problem: Britain doesn't have enough skilled computer staff to solve the "millennium bug" computer problem: there are millions of lines of code which need to be examined by people, not machines, to check for errors.

Here's another problem: prisons are getting fuller, budgets are getting tighter, and the Prison Service is being encouraged to look for new ways to generate revenue by getting its inmates to do work for private businesses.

Can you see where this is heading? Of course you can. Though the computer company ICL was a little surprised the other day when a man from the Prison Service rang up and offered the services of its, ahem, captive workforce.

But then again, with the average computer contractor charging around £3,000 per week to work on millennium bug problems, while the average prisoner gets £7 per week for work for outside contractors (such as laundry and brush-making), you can see a certain attraction in the arrangement for private companies.

And the Prison Service could see the logic too: it's got 60,000 inmates in 136 jails. There must be some people there with computer skills - even if in some cases, it was computer skills that led to them getting locked up in the first place, for example for planting viruses, defrauding companies or hawking the Internet for child porn.

However, a Prison Service spokesman said that reports which appeared yesterday in the trade magazine *Computing* that it might be seeking to lock up a contract with ICL were "pure speculation". "On an annual basis the prison service explores employment opportunities with hundreds of companies in a range of fields," he said.

But, he admitted, "we have begun preliminary discussions with ICL about the possibility of providing some labour to undertake data transfer work."

How would you choose the people to do the work, though? Surely the very ones who would have the right qualifications to do the work are, by definition, the ones you don't really trust to do it.

A spokesman for ICL agreed: "There's a raft of issues that need to be addressed - security, vetting, payment, getting the agreement of customers. And we wouldn't want to be accused of exploiting cheap labour."

Dealing with industry has caused some teething troubles for US prisons, which also hire their inmates' services to private companies. It has thrown up some odd pairings - including prisoners being used by long-distance phone companies to make marketing calls, and others to validate credit cards for debt agencies.

The sort of thing ICL is worried about is that its captive workforce might - accidentally or on purpose - miss some important mistake in work that was being corrected to solve the millennium bug, expected to hit computers at the end of 1999. It might take that long before they decide whether to go ahead.

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

PEOPLE



Top gun: Claire Drew test-piloting the upgraded headgear that forms an integral part of the RAF Jaguar's sophisticated weapons guidance system. Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

Daddy's girl shows her mettle in man's world

Claire Drew was very much a daddy's girl. When her father - a deck officer in the merchant navy - returned from sea she would spend her time with him "fiddling with cars". One of her most prized possessions was a Scalextric set.

Yesterday at 30 years old, she was named as Young Woman Engineer of the Year. Ms Drew, an engineering manager at GEC Marconi Avionics in Rochester, is working on a project to upgrade the helmets for pilots of RAF Jaguar aircraft. The headgear is part of a highly sophisticated weapons guidance system.

The presentation of the 1997 award, sponsored by the Institution of Electronics and Electrical Incorporated Engineers, comes just days after news that girls are beating boys at science and maths in school. In the past, however, girls have experienced considerable difficulty when switching from school and university to the workplace. Only 300 of the institution's 27,000 members are women. Ms Drew, the mother of a three-year-old girl, has experienced no such problems. "I've received nothing but support throughout my career. I know a lot of women encounter difficulties, but I've been very lucky."

After a higher national diploma at Liverpool Polytechnic, she got a job with British Aerospace. Six years later she moved to GEC Marconi in Kent. "Although girls have always been encouraged in maths and science, they don't see the range of options within engineering and don't really look at the discipline as a serious career move," she said yesterday.

The award, which included a £1,000 cheque and a silver rose bowl, was presented by Labour MP and fellow engineer Claire Currie-Thomson. Runner-up was Vicki Houston, 28, from Glasgow, who works for Yarrow Shipbuilders. Most promising young engineer was Abigail Small, 23, from Preston, Lancashire.

— Barrie Clement, Labour Editor

Circus family's double trouble

Yesterday was a bad day for the Chipperfield circus family. As one son lay critically ill in a Florida hospital after being mauled by a tiger, his brother waited to hear whether he would be in trouble with the law for shooting the beast.

Graham Chipperfield, 28, came to his brother's rescue when Arnie, a 350lb Bengal tiger, bit Richard, 24, on the back of the head. He could be now charged with breaking state laws against animal cruelty and discharging a firearm in a public building. A police spokeswoman said: "The state attorney will have to decide whether a warrant will be issued for the arrest of Graham Chipperfield."

Members of the Chipperfield family have been performing in circuses since 1684 and have a long tradition of working with lions, tigers and leopards. As the British



Richard Chipperfield: Critical

public lost its taste for live animal shows, however. Richard and Graham moved to work in America where performing animals are still deemed acceptable.

In an interview last week, Richard said: "Tigers are dependable and elegant animals. I have fallen in love with them." Yesterday he was in a critical but stable condition in hospital.

— Rosa Prince

Mrs Hamilton could be MP

Christine Hamilton, the wife of disgraced former MP Neil Hamilton, said yesterday that she had had enough of politics - but added that it was possible that she could stand for Parliament herself.

Mrs Hamilton was commenting on the recent Channel 4 comedy *Mr White Goes To Westminster*, based loosely on the Hamiltons' electoral battle with Martin Bell, in which a disgraced MP's wife runs for Parliament. She said: "There's a whole world outside politics and it would be quite fun having time to enjoy it."

But asked if she might stand for Parliament, Mrs Hamilton, 48, said: "Everything's a possibility - I'm not saying it's a probability." "I'm the kind of person who's going to survive life. You have to cope with whatever life chuckles at you."

UPDATE

INDUSTRY

Fat cats still get the lion's share

The gap between the "haves" and "have nots" in British industry is continuing to widen as directors award themselves pay rises four times the increases they grant to their employees, according to a study published today.

The ratio of the pay of the highest-paid director and the average employee was 12 to 1 in 1994, but three years later it had increased to 16 to 1. The TUC, which asked City research group Datastream International to compile the figures from company accounts, said the statistics show that little had been done to curb "executive greed" despite the strictures of the Greenbury Committee, which investigated boardroom remuneration more than two years ago.

Comparing the same 362 companies in 1994 and 1997, the TUC's report, "Wider Still and Wider", showed that the average pay of the highest-paid director, excluding shares and incentives, had increased from £204,160 in 1994 to £312,910 in 1997, an increase of 53 per cent or around 16 per cent a year. At the same time the average pay of employees rose 13 per cent, or 4 per cent a year, from £17,240 to £19,410.

— Barrie Clement, Labour Editor

CHILDREN

Record number of calls to charity

A record number of children called ChildLine last year, it was disclosed yesterday. More than 1.2 million youngsters sought advice from the free national helpline service for children in trouble or danger - a 12 per cent rise on 1996.

The most common problems were physical and sexual abuse - mainly at the hands of their own families - in particular their fathers - bullying, and worries that other children were being mistreated. The number of youngsters given help and protection after contacting the service for the first time also increased last year - by 14 per cent to 102,816, compared with the previous year, according to the charity's annual review published yesterday.

Of the new callers, more than 18,000 - 18 per cent - telephoned in 1997-98 about being physically or sexually abused. 14,311 (14 per cent) said they were being bullied and 10,500 (10 per cent) called because they were worried about someone else, usually another child.

Other calls were about problems ranging from unwanted and under-age pregnancies to unhappiness because parents were divorcing. On-going counselling was given to thousands of others who continued to need help.

However, the charity warned that many children were still not getting the help they need because they could not get through to the service.

TRANSPORT

Urban traffic getting slower

Car journeys are taking longer because of increasing congestion, according to Government figures released yesterday. The survey of speeds in 24 English towns and cities, carried out by the Department of Transport in 1996 and 1997, showed that in 14 regions cars were travelling slower.

The biggest fall in average speeds was seen in Peterborough, where cars in off-peak hours had been travelling at 38.8 mph in 1993 and now only manage 33.7 mph.

Not all cities suffered. In six areas, there has been a significant increase in average speed. In Derby, speeds rose by nearly 5 mph. In Tyneside, the absence of roadworks when surveying took place in January 1997 led to a rise in average speeds of more than 3mph during the rush hour.

— Rondeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.46	Italy (lira)	2,841
Austria (schillings)	20.22	Japan (yen)	203.10
Belgium (francs)	59.45	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.26	Netherlands (guilders)	3.24
Cyprus (pounds)	0.84	Norway (kroner)	11.91
Denmark (kroner)	11.03	Portugal (escudos)	202.91
France (francs)	9.64	Spain (pesetas)	243.63
Germany (marks)	2.89	Sweden (kroner)	12.79
Greece (drachmes)	459.18	Switzerland (francs)	2.34
Hong Kong (\$)	12.17	Turkey (lira)	331.162
Ireland (pounds)	1.15	USA (\$)	1.58

Source: Thomson Guide. Rates for indication purposes only.

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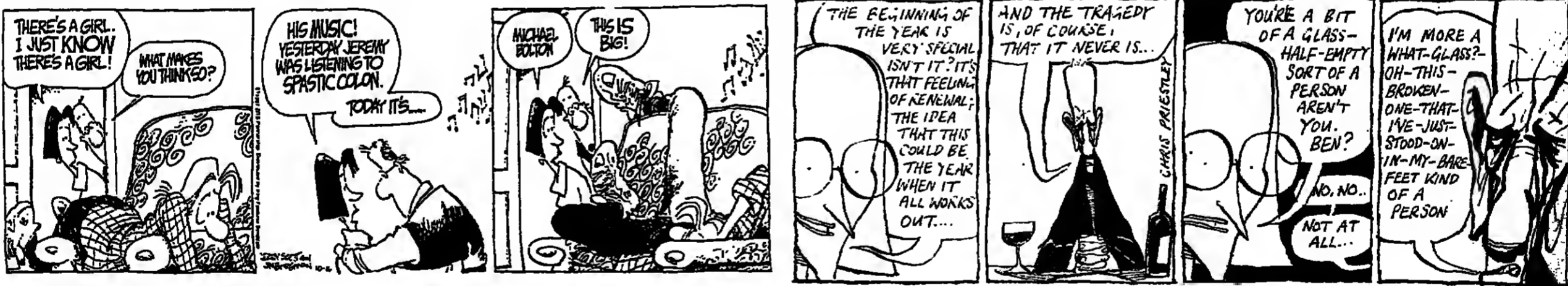


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DELL

The night

Small West Sussex town of Selsey woke up yesterday morning to a freak 100mph windstorm. Reports on the shellshocked town then became a story for looters and...

...the night before midnight. In the middle of the night, a small West Sussex town of Selsey woke up yesterday morning to a freak 100mph windstorm. Reports on the shellshocked town then became a story for looters and...

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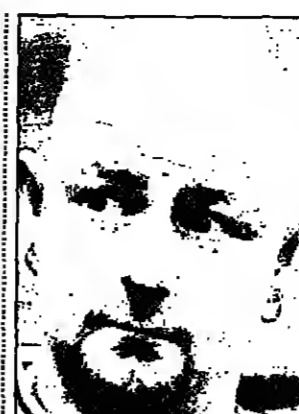
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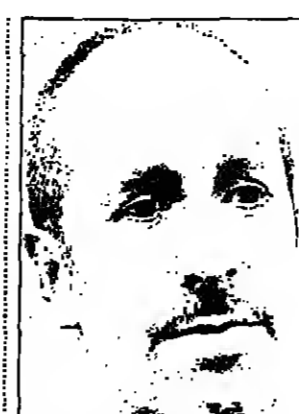
SAM MCCRORY, 32, camp commander of the Ulster Defence Association inside the Maze. Tattooed from head to foot, he is currently serving 16 years for conspiracy to murder. Just days ago he warned that the Loyalist ceasefire had reached breaking point.



MICHAEL STONE, 42, is notorious for his 1988 attack on republican mourners at Milltown cemetery during the funeral of three IRA terrorists shot by the SAS in Gibraltar. Three people were killed. A member of the UDA, Stone has killed six Catholics in all.



GLEN 'TITCH' CUNNINGHAM, 30, was sentenced to 25 years in 1995 for an attempted murder in 1993. Was identified and arrested a year later by a broken tooth found in a getaway car. He recently lost 28 days' remission for throwing a can of cola at a warder.



BOBBY PHILPOTT, 43, leader of the Ulster Freedom Fighters, is serving 17 years for two attempted murders. He said: "We have met Mo Mowlam before. We hope she meets all sides including the Provos. The situation is on a knife edge but I support my party to be at the talks."



PADRAIG WILSON, 38, is the commanding officer of the IRA inside the Maze. He is serving 24 years for the attempted murder of a soldier and for conspiracy. He was arrested in possession of a booby-trap bomb. He said yesterday: "We want this ... to work. We are in this to try and remove the need for armed struggle."



HARRY MAGUIRE, 37, is serving life for the murder of Corporal Derek Wood, 24, and Corporal David Howes, 23, two signals officers who were brutally beaten and then shot after accidentally driving into an IRA funeral procession. He organised the movement of the battered officers by taxi to waste ground where they were finished off.



JIM McVEIGH, 33, comes from the Falls Road in Belfast. He is serving 24 years for conspiracy to murder service personnel. He has served 13 years.



SEAN MATHERS, 21, one of the youngest Republican prisoners in the Maze, is serving a life sentence for conspiracy to cause explosions. He comes from Newry.

The immoral Maze: where the prisoners rule the roost

When Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, steps into the Maze prison today, she will be entering rigorously disciplined regime policed not by the prison authorities, but by the commanding officers of 'prisoners of war'. Steve Beggan describes the most unusual prison in the world.

They were the questions on everybody's lips the day Billy Wright, the "King Rat" of the Loyalist Volunteer Force was gunned down inside the Maze. How could prisoners in the UK's toughest jail get access to guns? And once they had, how did they evade capture in order to use them?

But the nature of the Maze itself provides the answers. A complex of eight H-blocks housing 500 of the most dangerous terrorists in the world, the Maze is more akin to a prison of war camp - with its chains of command - than it is to a jail housing common criminals.

It was in 1981 that the true distinction between its inmates - men of murderous principle - and ordinary convicts became recognised in the political process. Then, 10 IRA volunteers died after a hunger strike aimed at securing special status for political prisoners. After the death of Bobby Sands, the first striker to die, the distinction was made clearly.

As a result, the blocks represent segregation as well as incarceration. A-wing, for example, houses 15 Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) republican prisoners, while neighbouring C-wing is home to 15 Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) terrorists.

It was from C-wing two weeks ago that three INLA killers launched their attack, across the roof of H-block 6, on the minibus carrying Wright, still inside the prison but not safe from their reach.

Because of the nature of each block, with prisoners acting as a disciplined unit and with commanding officers giving orders and authorising break-outs, the procurement of weapons, equipment, mobile phones, information and even women is difficult to prevent.

Before Christmas, each of the paramilitary groups was allowed to hold a party. During the IRA's celebrations, the convicted murderer Liam Averill escaped, dressed as a woman. Escape attempts are a regular occurrence. The most spectacular came in 1983 when, after assembling an armoury of five guns, 35 IRA prisoners ran through the gates. Most were recaptured shortly afterwards. The inquiry into that breakout concluded that a member of staff - either bribed, blackmailed or intimidated - may have carried the guns in.

Flashback to the Milltown Cemetery attack by Stone

Such is the proximity of the blocks and the mutual hatred of their inmates, that Mo Mowlam's meeting today with Michael Stone, the man who ran amok in Milltown Cemetery with a gun and hand grenades, is expected to be followed within days with a meeting only yards away at which Harry Maguire will be present.

Maguire was in Milltown Cemetery when Stone killed three during the funerals nine years ago of the IRA active service unit gunned down by the SAS in Gibraltar. Days later, at the funeral of one of those murdered during the funeral, Maguire was one of the mob which beat and then killed Cpl Derek Wood, 24, and Cpl David Howes, 23, the Royal Signals officers who were dragged from their car after becoming caught up in the funeral procession.

And it will not be lost on her that, though imprisoned only yards apart, joined inextricably by a week-long chain of events, Maguire and Stone might as well be on different planets.

Explosives seized in Dublin

A haul of one and a half tonnes of home-made explosives seized in Dublin may have been intended for bomb attacks in Britain or Northern Ireland, Irish police suggested yesterday.

Four people were arrested and gardai believe one of them is connected with a recently formed dissident republican group, the 32 County Sovereignty Committee, headed by Bernadette Sands McKevitt, sister of the dead hunger striker Bobby Sands, in opposition to the peace talks.

The swoop followed intelligence reports and a surveillance operation by Garda special branch and anti-terrorist units and came the day after the Army defused a 500lb car bomb in Banbridge, Co Down.

In the past, home-made fertilizer bombs have been the province of the breakaway republican group, the Continuity Army Council.

The seizure came as Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, prepared to meet prisoners at the Maze prison today and as police swooped in connection with a series of terrorist incidents.

In Dublin, Brendan McFarlane appeared at the Special Criminal Court charged with the 1983 kidnapping of Don Tidey, the then-head of Quinnsworth.

Ireland's largest supermarket group, McFarlane, 47, from Belfast, a former leader of hunger-striking IRA prisoners, was accused of falsely imprisonment and unlawful possession of arms with intent to endanger life. Sinn Féin vice-president Pat Doherty called the decision to charge him "deeply unhelpful at this very difficult time".

In Belfast, a number of people were arrested in the loyalist Shankill Road area. It was thought they were being questioned about the murder of Catholic Edmund Treanor in a pub on New Year's Eve.

— Alan Murdoch and Louise Jury

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...up - thus helping
...lose weight - could
...be just around the
...corner. Nutritionists
...however are more
...sceptical. Genes Cooper,
...Consumer Affairs
...correspondent, reports.

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مكتبة الامم



Temptation: Last year, 850,000 tons of confectionery was eaten in Britain, pushing sales to a record £5bn

Photograph: Tom Pilstone

Sweet-toothed Britons lead world in chocolate eating

The British leave the rest of the world standing when it comes to buying sweets and chocolate, according to the 1997 Confectionery Market Review.

We each eat an average per year of 16kg (more than 35lb), making us the largest per capita confectionery market in the world, way ahead of the United States at 10kg, France with 9kg and Japan with 3kg.

The review, which is produced each year by Cadbury and Trebor Bassett, shows that the market in confectionery has grown by 16 per cent in the last 10 years. In 1987 we munched our way through 735,000 tons of sweets and chocolates but by last year that had risen to a massive 850,000 tons, which pushed sales over the £5bn mark for the first time. The growth is attributed to people tending to snack more, com-

bined with a proliferation of new brands over the last decade.

Confectionery continues to dominate the snack-food sector with its sales outstripping the combined total of ice cream, biscuits, snacks and crisps.

While people all ages eat chocolate and sweets, the picture changes when you look at who actually buys the confectionery. Although children account for one-third of all confectionery eaten, they buy only 6 per cent. The biggest purchasers are women - two-thirds of all confectionery is bought by them. However, because women still do the bulk of the family shopping they eat only two-thirds of what they buy, compared with men who eat nearly all they buy themselves.

Chocoholics vary around

the country - Londoners eat the least confectionery, spending £1.44 per head per week. Those in Wales and the West Country spend the most - £2.09 - closely followed by those in the South and South-east who spend £2.04.

The traditional bar - Cadbury's Dairy Milk - continues to be the best seller, followed by Mars and Twix. The best-selling sweet brand is Wrigley's Extra chewing gum, followed by Polos and Trebor Extra Strong mints.

Alan Palmer, marketing director of Cadbury, said: "This report shows how great the British confectionery industry is - we really are true world-beaters, and our love affair with chocolate and sweets shows no sign of abating."

— Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Slimmers' yoghurt claims to make stomach feel full

Chocolates, biscuits and sweets which claim to fill you up - thus helping you lose weight - could be just around the corner. Nutritionists however are more sceptical. Glenda Cooper, Consumer Affairs Correspondent, reports.

which carries the Olibra swiftly into the small intestine. Scotia says that the feeling of fullness lasts for three to six hours, reducing the temptation to snack between meals and lessening the desire for food. It claims that consumption of calories at the next meal is significantly reduced.

A trial carried out by the University of Ulster involving 29 men and women found that after eating the yoghurt calorie intake was reduced by 16 per cent.

weighing all foods and weighing the leftovers.

The yoghurt's makers insist this is not an appetite suppressant along the lines of controversial drugs because it uses ingredients which occur naturally in the diet, and activates natural reactions.

However, Tom Sanders, professor of human nutrition at King's College, London, and author of *You Don't Have To Diet*, said yesterday that more testing was needed: "The company is trying to wheedle its way into selling a product ... without testing for safety."

"The study is very short-term and it is not going to say whether it's going to work in the long-term. It also takes quite a long time to get signals to the brain and most people wolf their food down in 20 minutes whereas the brain signals may take one or two hours."

He added that even if the substance made you feel full, that was not necessarily the answer to controlling appetite. "The reasons why we gain weight and overeat are really quite complex. The idea that obesity is due to not controlling hunger signals is not the whole story. Most people eat because of the social situation."

Robert Dow, chief executive of Scotia, said yesterday that studies to see the long-term effects and any side effects would be carried out.

But Professor Sanders said the idea that the product was "natural" and, therefore, safe was not acceptable: "You need to have everything tested after BSE where things were natural but extremely nasty."



Fat intake was reduced by 22.5 per cent.

The participants in the double blind trial ate breakfast and then lunch when they were given either a normal or an Olibra yoghurt.

At 5pm a buffet meal was served where participants could eat as much as they liked. The amount of food eaten by each volunteer was recorded by pre-

Scientists yesterday introduced a yoghurt with an ingredient which they say could help you lose weight by fooling the body into thinking that the stomach is full.

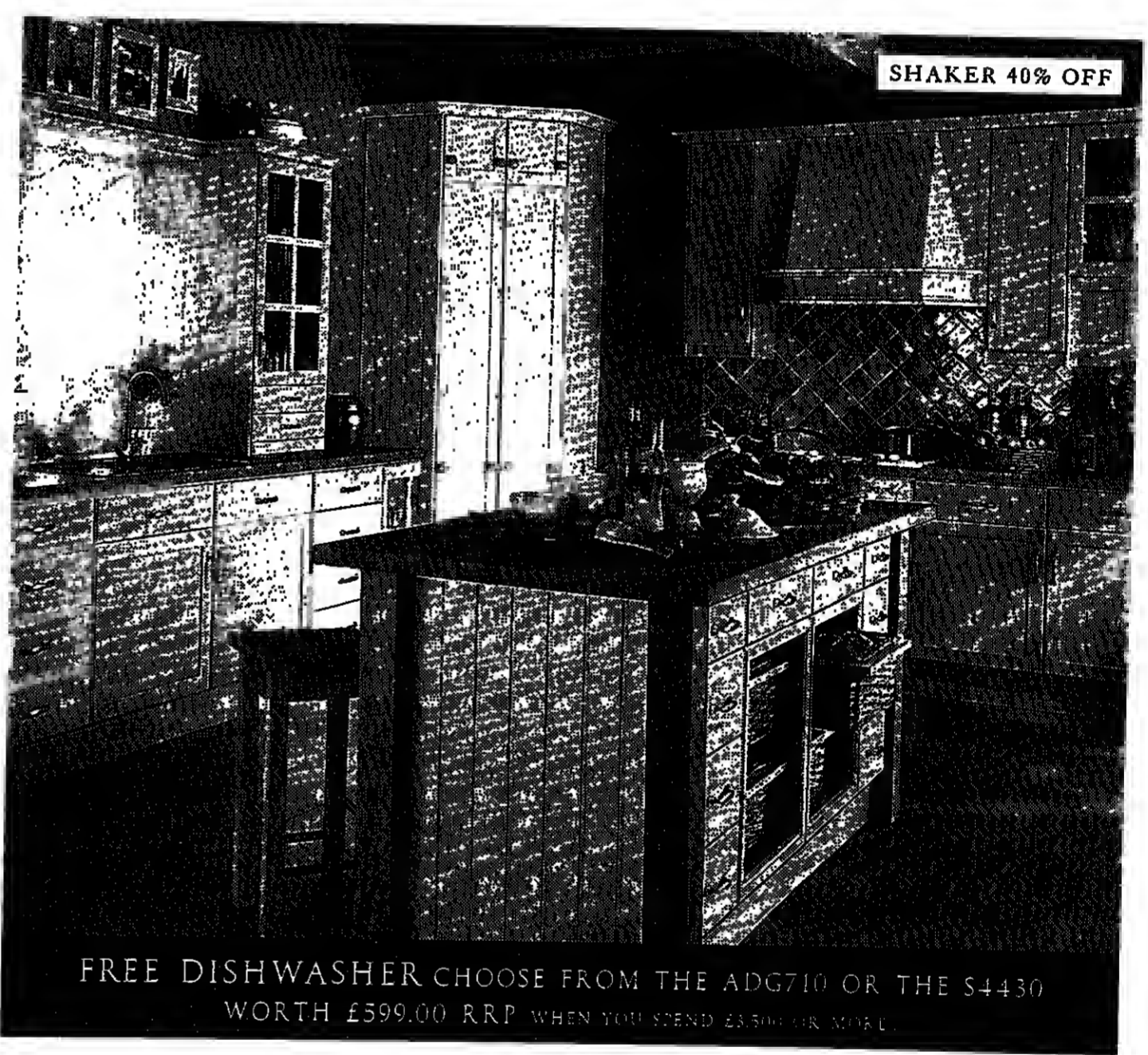
A substance called Olibra, made from palm oil and oat oil, is said to trigger the chemical reaction in the small intestine which tells the brain that you have had enough to eat. The first yoghurts containing Olibra went on sale in Sweden yesterday and the developer of the product, Scotia Pharmaceuticals, said it hoped to follow suit in Britain.

But nutritionists said yesterday that more work was needed before it would be possible to say whether the yoghurt fulfilled expectations, and they asked Scotia Pharmaceuticals for more information on the product.

Olibra is made by taking palm oil and extracting ingredients which appear to activate sensors in the intestine which then release peptides into the blood. These in turn send messages to the brain that food is in the gut.

Mixing palm oil with oat oil and water produces an emulsion

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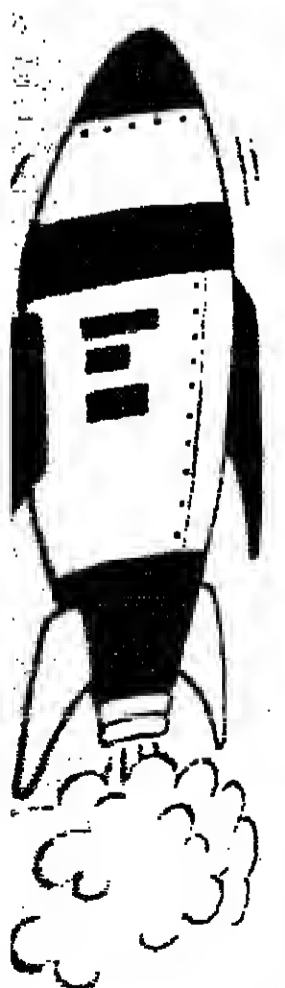
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Revenue

The latest attempt to circle the globe in a balloon, by three men including a British engineer, ended before it began yesterday. Kathy Marks in the Swiss Alps, explains what happened and asks why this elusive quest excites such passions.

The conditions were perfect for a launch at first light yesterday morning in Chateau d'Oex, in the Swiss Alps. The 177ft-high silver balloon should have lifted off into the skies and floated across the Mediterranean towards Africa, on the first leg of its 30,000-mile voyage.

The *Breilung Orbiter 2* balloon would have been carrying three men who have pinned their hopes on flying around the world non-stop, propelled only by the winds.

But disaster struck as it was being unloaded by crane at the launch site. The four cables that secure the gondola to the canopy inexplicably slipped

their fastenings, sending it crashing back on the lorry that had transported it. Repairs and weather patterns will delay take-off for at least a week.

The gods have not smiled on successive attempts by rival teams to be the first to circumnavigate the Earth in this fashion. Just this week, American Steve Fossett, thwarted by faulty equipment, gave up after 7,000 miles and landed his *Solo Spirit* balloon in Russia. Last November, Richard Branson's envelope snapped its moorings before take-off in Marrakesh, Morocco.

For the two Breitling pilots, Swiss-born Bertrand Piccard and Wim Verstraeten, a Belgian, it was their second false start. Last year they were forced to ditch in the sea just hours into their journey because of a kerosene leak. Andy Elson, a British flight engineer who was to have accompanied them this time, was asked what would have happened if the cables had failed in flight. "We would not be having this conversation now," he said.

Piccard said: "It's like having a nightmare and not being able

to wake up. But it is not part of our philosophy to give up."

To many people, there is something faintly absurd about the obsession with achieving this particular feat. But to flying enthusiasts, it represents the ultimate challenge, the "last great aeronautical adventure within the world's atmosphere", as *National Geographic* magazine has called it.

The thirst to enter the history books was expressed eloquently by Piccard. "In this century," he said, "almost everything on the planet has been explored and discovered: all the oceans, all the mountains, all the continents ... This is maybe the last great adventure, to fly around the world with no engine and no way of steering, pushed only by the forces of Nature."

The human urge to set and break records has for centuries been associated with circumnavigation of the Earth. On the seas, it was first accomplished by the crew of the *Victoria*, led by the Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan, in 1522. In the air, the accolade went to two Douglas World Cruisers in 1924. George Matthew Schilline, an Ameri-

can, was the first to walk round the world, from 1897 to 1904.

In the rarefied world of hot-air ballooning, there has been fierce competition ever since the first manned balloon was launched in France in 1783, its burner fuelled by damp straw, old rags and rotting meat. The first person to ascend into the stratosphere was Piccard's grandfather, Auguste, in 1931.

Piccard, 39, is a psychiatrist: he planned to hypnotise his fellow team members so that they could snatch some sleep during the journey. Elson, 44, of Wells, in Somerset, spent his childhood on sailboats and says that he turned to ballooning "so I could go sailing into the sky and escape". Fosssett, a millionaire securities trader, flies in an unpressurised

Additionally galling to the Breitling team will be the fact that today sees the start of a rival round-the-world bid, by an American duo lifting off in New Mexico. And Branson is repairing his balkon for another attempt from Marrakesh this month. One of them, they all believe, is about to clinch it.



The sacking of Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr, two left-wing MEPs, from the Labour Party had been an automatic formality following their decision to apply to join the Green Party group in the European Parliament.

In a letter of notification sent yesterday, Tom Sawyer, Labour's general secretary, told them that "such membership is fundamentally inconsistent with the terms and conditions of your membership of this party".

A party spokesman said they had been asked to do the honourable thing and resign. "They clearly have no intention of doing so. We have therefore acted promptly in line with party rules."

In a statement, the two said they had been asked to resign "in order to ensure the party's reputation and the integrity of the Labour Party".

that they had been denied the right to speak at a European Parliamentary Labour Party meeting. "But they cannot stop us speaking to the millions of Labour voters who are distressed and angry at the Tory policies which are being pursued by the Blair government in respect of lone parents and their children, the rights of the disabled, and the very future of the welfare state."

The vehemence of those views would have made it most improbable that the two men

— Anthony Bevins

Without saying so, because it would have been uncharacteristically presumptuous, Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, yesterday put himself forward as a candidate for the post of First Minister in the new Scottish Parliament.

Ending months of speculation in which the name of Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, occasionally popped up as a contender, Mr Dewar said in a statement that with the Scotland Bill due to receive its second reading in the Commons on Monday, it was the right time to make his intentions clear.

"There is of course much preparatory work to be done to ensure that the Parliament gets off to a flying start," he said, "and I am fully committed to that task. The relationship with the Government of the United Kingdom will be crucial. The new parliament must earn the confidence of the Scots. If I can help in any way to achieve these aims as a member of the new parliament, I would very much want to do so."

Tony Blair, who actively encouraged Mr Dewar to make the move, said he would be greatly missed at Westminster. But he added: "I'm actually delighted that Donald has decided to stand for the Scottish parliament. He is an outstanding figure in British and Scottish politics and has an enormous contribution to make." Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party, also welcomed the news, though he warned: "The issue of who will be First Minister is for the people of Scotland to determine in elections to the Parliament in May 1999."

The Liberal Democrats' Menzies Campbell said: "He will be a commanding presence in the Scottish Parliament and has the advantage of being highly regarded right across the political spectrum."

—Anthony Revins, Political Editor

A financial consultant sent a series of death threats to six colleagues when he was suspended as he was due to jet off for a conference in Mexico, a court was told yesterday.

The letters from Richard Burrell had a picture of a bullet with the words "Death where is thy sting?" and the letters "RIP" below, a jury at Leeds Crown Court was told. Mr Bur-

There is nothing left to live for." The trial continues.

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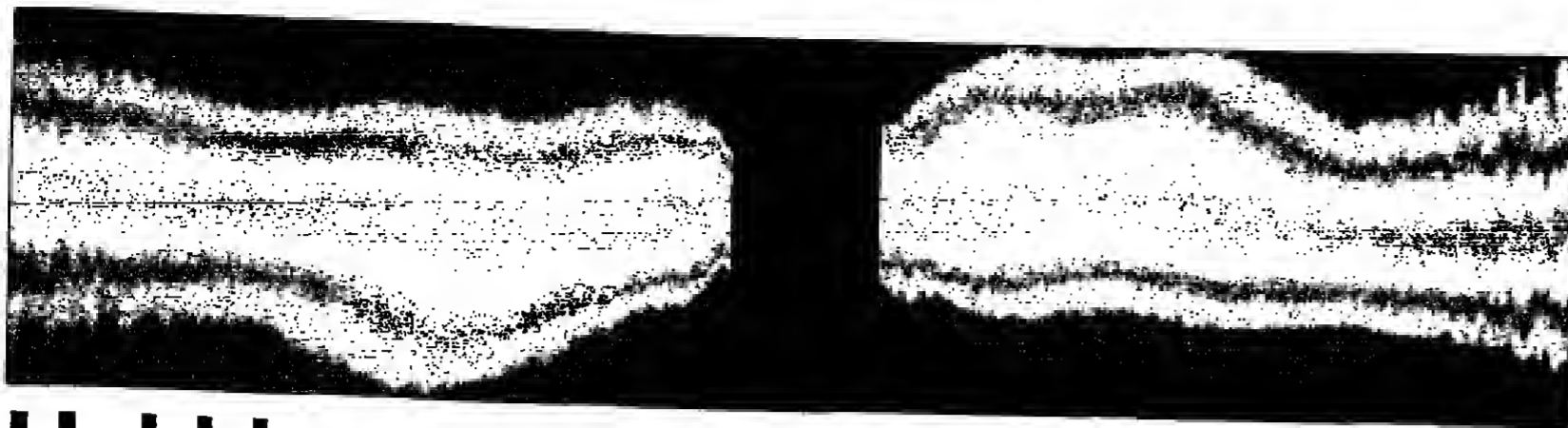
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Hubble reveals spectacle of Jupiter's 'Northern Lights'

The "Northern Lights" seen on Earth have their equivalents on all the other planets. Jupiter, the biggest, doesn't skimp when it comes to a show, as the latest pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope reveal. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, explains.

The "aurora borealis", the free light show put on by nature at our north and south poles, may be impressive on Earth. But it hardly compares to that available on Jupiter.

These new images, captured by Hubble, show that the largest planet in our solar system can match the best of Earth's northern lights. They extend hundreds of miles upwards into the Jovian atmosphere, and thousands of miles down over the planet's poles.

The same phenomenon has been observed on Earth, and photographed by the Space Shuttle. Usually they are called the Northern Lights (or South-

ern Lights, depending which hemisphere you're in).

Yet the ones pictured are produced by a very different process from that on the Earth.

Here the flickering auroras are caused by fast-moving electrons, thrown out in the "solar wind" from the Sun, hitting the Earth's upper atmosphere. On Jupiter, the lights are caused by particles thrown out by volcanoes on Io, one of the planet's moons. The particles are then magnetically trapped and begin rotating with the planet, producing ovals of auroral light centred on its magnetic poles (where the magnetic flux is most intense) during both day and night.

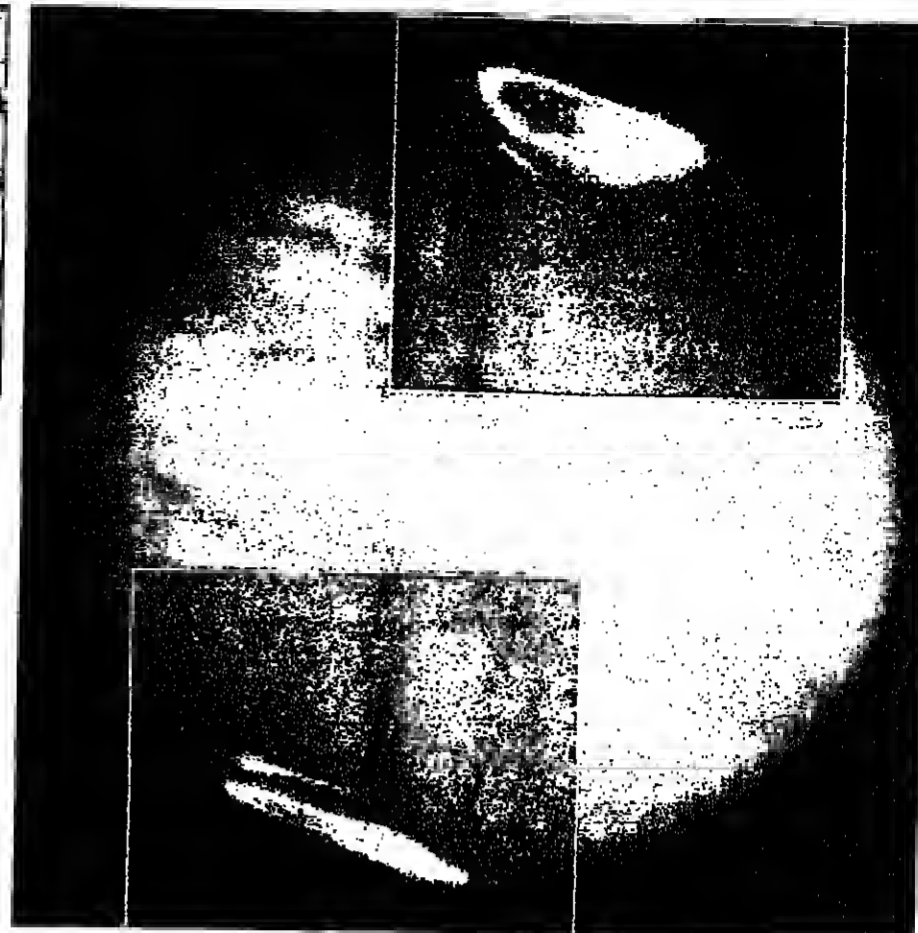
The electrons thrown out from Io generate an invisible electric current equivalent to one million amperes, and generate localised aurorae where they enter the planet's magnetic field. Faint traces, looking like white, comet-shaped streaks outside the polar ovals, show where those streams are trapped in Jupiter's magnetosphere. They persist for hours after the moon has passed on its orbit, which takes almost two

days.

While the light show on Jupiter may be impressive, it does have one disadvantage. It is invisible to human eyes, because the light created by the electrical energy storms is in the ultraviolet part of the spectrum. That also means that it cannot be observed from the

Earth's surface, since our atmosphere absorbs most of the light at these wavelengths. (The ultraviolet lenses used means that sunlight reflected from the planet's surface appears brown.) The Hubble telescope is the only convenient way we presently have to witness such natural phenomena.

The colours in the picture above show the density of a disc of dust circling Beta Pictoris, a star 50 light years from us: the more dust, the redder it is. Astronomers now reckon that the warped shape of the disc shows that there is a big planet, or very small star, orbiting it. It might be the same size as Jupiter (right) - where electrical storms over the poles rise hundreds of miles above its surface.



Will Dolly have a little lamb?

The cloned sheep which may be its species' most famous member has been mated, but there's no news yet on whether Dolly is pregnant.

However, if she is, then the resulting offspring could answer many questions about cloning, and perhaps even forestall the idea of cloning humans.

In particular, scientists at the Roslin Institute near Edinburgh are keen to know whether the offspring of a cloned animal are sterile, or if they have any other birth or growth abnormalities. It is already known that in the womb, cloned animals tend to be heavier and have more birth problems, and frequently fail to survive. Whether those problems are common to their children is as yet unknown.

Answering those questions is key to the commercial development of cloning for farm animals. If clones' offspring prove not to be viable, they would have to be recreated with each generation.

It is also important for those who would clone humans, such as Richard Seed, the Chicago physicist who shocked America this week by saying he wants to set up a chain of 20 human cloning clinics. The idea has been attacked as unethical.

It could also be impractical, depending on what happens in Edinburgh. "Dolly has been mated and we will wait for nature to take its course," said Dr Harry Griffin, the institute's

assistant director. "We don't know if she is pregnant yet."

Staff at the institute said last September that Dolly would be taken to a ram early this year to determine whether she is fertile and can produce healthy lambs.

Dolly, now 18 months old, is a Finn Dorset breed. She was the first mammal cloned from the cell of another adult mammal.

Professor Graeme Bulfield, director of the institute, said that the breeding will determine whether Dolly's lambs would be affected by her own unusual conception. Her offspring would not be clones and would be genetically different from their mother, he said.

Healthy lambs would mean that the cloning process had produced a fully healthy, fertile sheep, which would be valuable knowledge for PPL Therapeutics, the Scottish biotechnology company formed to market the centre's work, Professor Bulfield said.

The institute has already proven that cloned animals can reproduce. Megan and Morag, sheep conceived through a different cloning process, have lambs of their own.

Dr Griffin said the institute was planning a centre where it could put Dolly, Megan, Morag and Polly, a cloned lamb carrying a human gene, on public display. He said it should be open by Easter.

— Charles Arthur

DAILY POEM

Imperial

By Don Paterson

Is it normal to get this wet? Baby, I'm frightened - I covered her mouth with my own;
she lay in my arms till the storm-window brightened
and stood at our heads like a stone

After months of jaw jaw, determined that neither
win ground, or be handed the edge,
we gave ourselves up, one to the another
like prisoners over a bridge

and no trade was ever so fair or so tender;
so where was the flaw in the plan,
the night we lay down on the flag of surrender
and woke on the flag of Japan

Our Daily Poems until Monday 19 January (when the winner will be announced) come from the 10 volumes shortlisted for the 1997 TS Eliot Prize, presented by the Poetry Book Society. All the authors will take part in a reading on Sunday 18 January at 7.30pm in the Almeida Theatre, London N1 (box office: 0171-359 4404). This poem comes from *God's Gift to Women* (Faber, £6.99. © Don Paterson).



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Rescue hope for threatened corner of Dickensian London

Residents and fans of a rare surviving corner of Dickensian London took heart yesterday at the Grade II listing of two pubs and a collection of commercial buildings and terraced houses.

It is by no means the end of the campaign to save the Borough Market area – a popular location for film-makers – threatened with demolition to make way for a viaduct, but official recognition of the quality of the buildings could prove a powerful weapon.

The viaduct is regarded by Railtrack as essential to its £580m Thameslink 2000 project to improve public transport in the South-east. Conservationists have argued for a tunnel. The scheme would take the roof off Borough Market itself, the country's oldest fruit and vegetable market and so far unlisted.

Railtrack said yesterday that alternative routes, including a tunnel, had been considered and "none of them was viable". The company will now have to seek special consent to demolish any of the listed buildings. Almost certainly there will be a public inquiry.

Tony Banks, the heritage minister, said the listing would ensure the Thameslink 2000 plans were taken forward as



On location: Richard E Grant walking through the Borough Market area in a scene from the film *Keep the Aspidochelone*

sensitively as possible. "The Borough Market area is a fascinating pocket of London's Victorian history, renowned for its Dickensian atmosphere."

The buildings listed include

two public houses, the Globe, dating from 1872, and based on an unusual, almost heart-shaped plan; and the Wheat-sheaf, with its 1890s interior largely intact, a thin screen separating the saloon and public

bars and a central counter. Also covered is a block of commercial premises in Borough High Street built in the 1830s in a design by Robert Smirke, terrace houses in Park Street, and the Joiner Street railway bridge,

converted to pedestrian use in 1890 after it collapsed.

However, campaigner Mike Challenger, a painter who has lived in one of the threatened Park Street houses for 21 years, said it was impossible to build

a half-kilometre viaduct without destroying the area. "It doesn't matter if you have a nice bit of brick-facing on the pillars. It's still a giant bridge."

Stephen Goodwin,
Heritage Correspondent

Army makes married life less of a battle

Facing a recruitment shortfall of thousands, the Army is taking steps to improve life for its married soldiers. Andrew Buncombe reports on the latest move to make the military a happier place.

The Army is not a marriage guidance agency; anything done to try and make married life easier for soldiers has always been done on an unofficial basis. But concern over the shortfall of around 5,500 personnel has led it to take formal steps to stop trained soldiers leaving. The latest step has been to lengthen tours of duty, where requested, for soldiers with wives, husbands or partners.

"The old joke from lots of army wives is that they never have time to unpack properly," said a Ministry of Defence spokesman. "As soon as they start to get everything straight and put all their nick-nacks in place, they have to move on again. They say they seem to spend all their time with packing cases in the hallway."

Moving on every 18 months or so could add to the pressures of a potentially stressful job, said the spokesman. Not only did it affect relationships between soldiers and their partners, but it also seriously disrupted family life. "It is particularly hard if there are children to be considered," he said. "Some go to boarding schools but many parents prefer not to do this and have them living at home."

"It clearly cannot be helpful for children to keep having to move schools every couple of years."

"We also want our soldiers to

be stable. A happy soldier works better. We would not want to have someone defusing a bomb if they were worrying about what was going on at home."

In an effort to deal with this, the Army's director of military operations is lengthening tours of duty to up to three years from the current average of between 18 months and two years.

The impetus for this shift has clearly come from the top. In an interview last year with the Army's magazine, *Soldier*, the Chief of the General Staff General Sir Roger Wheeler said it was essential to balance military needs with other demands. "I'm well aware of the fact that not only do we need to train to be competent, but we need to recognise a large proportion of Army is married," he said. "Those soldiers need time with their families, time to attend career courses and time to have some of the fun side of the Army."

The Army Families Federation, which represents the interests of 56,000 families, said last night that its own research had found longer postings were likely to lead to a more stable lifestyle. "In addition to areas such as children's education, longer postings make it easier for soldiers' wives to get jobs, which these days is very important," said a spokeswoman.

Between 1996 and 1997 the Army took on 15,522 new recruits, but 15,354 serving soldiers left. "We realise that we are now operating in a highly competitive market place for good recruits and we want to attract the best," said the MoD spokesman. "We also want to stop people leaving. We don't want good soldiers doing five or six years ... then going back to civvie street."

Now atheists seek place in the Dome

In deciding on the contents of the "Spirit Zone" of the Millennium Dome, Peter Mandelson must satisfy not only those of different religions, but those of no religion at all. Britain's atheists are demanding that if, as Mr Mandelson asserts, the Dome is to have Christianity as its "central theme", it should tell the whole story.

In a letter to the Minister Without Portfolio and the New Millennium Experience company, Keith Porteous Wood, of the National Secular Society, proposes that the section on Christianity should include a record of "the centuries of cruelty, inhumanity and repression".

He writes: "I do hope the Millennium Experience will be a complete experience with, for instance, the Crusades Saloon to include Muslim heads impaled on spears; the Inquisition Pavilion where you will be able to torture and disembowel heretics; and perhaps, especially for the kiddies, the Witch Burning Experience – three old ladies an hour burned for your delinquency. We must also have a section devoted to the suppression of scientific knowledge – how about Galileo in chains for suggesting that the Earth revolved around the Sun."

Mr Porteous Wood adds: "Please remember that the Dome is being paid for by the country as a whole, including those of many faiths other than Christianity and also those of no faith. If the Dome is perceived as a primarily religious experience, it will be shunned by millions, as church attendances testify."

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, minister of Maidenhead Synagogue and spokesman for the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, is also anxious that the "dark side of Christianity" be included in the Dome alongside the positive aspects of the religion. "There should be a realistic appraisal which includes the enormous human suffering that has been caused internally to Christian heretics, externally to the Jews and in its battles against science as in Galileo and Darwin," he said.

However, a spokesman for the New Millennium Experience Company yesterday insisted that the Dome would be "very much a forward-thinking experience. It's not going to dwell on the heritage of the past too much. That's not the idea. We want it to inspire and embolden people rather than look back on negative things."

— Clare Garner

RAF officer appeals against conviction for wife murder

A senior RAF officer convicted of murdering his wife has launched an appeal.

Lawyers representing Sqn Ldr Nicholas Tucker claim that his conviction at Norwich Crown Court last month was unsafe.

They hope that the appeal will be heard by the Court of Appeal in London by the end of the year.

Tucker, 46, who was based at RAF Honington, Suffolk, was jailed for life after a jury found him guilty.

Jurors heard that Tucker's wife Carol, 52, was found lying face down in the river Lark at Lackford, Suffolk, in July 1995 after the couple's car left the road.

The prosecution said Tucker throttled his wife and held her under the water then staged the accident to cover his tracks.

Tucker denied the allegation and said he veered off the road to avoid two deer.

During a 13-day trial the prosecution alleged that Tucker was infatuated with Dijana Dudukovic, 21, when he killed his wife.

He met Miss Dudukovic, a Serbian interpreter, during a six-month tour of duty with the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia. During the trial, the court was told that the couple engaged in an ill-fated affair during which Tucker's attempts to make love to her proved unsuccessful. Miss Dudukovic has since married and now lives in Switzerland.

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Pollut

Scientists are warning that the air quality in London is becoming more and more dangerous. They say that the pollution is causing a lot of health problems, and that it is also damaging the environment. They are calling for more action to be taken to reduce the pollution.

Blow for as price

The price of oil has fallen sharply, which is a blow for the oil industry. This is because the price of oil is a major factor in the cost of many goods and services. A fall in the price of oil will therefore lead to a fall in the prices of many goods and services.

Taking

American scientists are warning that the use of drugs is becoming more and more dangerous. They say that the drugs are causing a lot of health problems, and that they are also damaging the environment. They are calling for more action to be taken to reduce the use of drugs.



Deep breath: A study of more than 27,000 schoolchildren from all parts of Britain shows that one in three reported some form of wheezing

Photograph: Bill Fleming

Pollution not to blame for childhood asthma

Teenagers are more likely to suffer from asthma in the clean air of rural Britain than they are in the polluted inner cities. Jeremy Laurence, Health Editor, examines a study which suggests the disease cannot be blamed on climate, diet or air quality.

Britain has one of the highest levels of asthma in the world, and it is now the most common chronic childhood disease. But although childhood asthma has risen sharply over the past few decades, scientists remain baffled about the cause. The mystery will be deepened by the findings of a study of more than 27,000 schoolchildren from all parts of Britain which showed that one in three reported some form of wheezing. Levels were, unexpectedly, slightly higher in rural areas and in Scotland, suggesting that the most popular suspect, pollution, is not the cause.

The evenness of the geographical spread also suggests that climate and diet are unlikely to be factors. The study did find, however, that the disease is under-diagnosed and undertreated, with only 60 per cent of those reporting wheezing getting any treatment. The researchers, from St George's Hospital Medical School, London, sent questionnaires to 93 large secondary schools across Britain, from the Shetland Islands to Cornwall.

All pupils aged 12-14 were asked to fill them in and 85 per cent were returned. Although one in three pupils said he or she had experienced wheezing in the last 12 months, only half had been diagnosed with asthma. Among those who reported frequent wheezing at night, only one third had been diagnosed with asthma. Many pupils were not getting the treatment they needed, the researchers say in the *British Medical Journal*. They estimate that six to seven pupils at each large secondary school are suffering moderate

to severe symptoms but are undiagnosed and untreated. Even among those who had been diagnosed, 4 per cent said they were suffering disruption to their lives, suggesting inadequate treatment. The researchers say the lack of geographical variation in the numbers of children affected suggests that whatever is causing the disease is everywhere. "Furthermore it suggests that factors which do vary geographically in Great Britain - such as climate, diet and outdoor environment - are not the main determinants of prevalence."

Dr Balvinder Kaur, clinical lecturer in public health medicine at St George's, who led the research, said: "The most striking thing was that the prevalence was high. The second most striking thing was that it was high everywhere. I would have expected higher levels in the cities where there is outdoor air pollution, but they were actually higher in non-metropolitan areas. We know pollution triggers asthma attacks in people who have the disease but it does not seem to be a cause of the disease itself." The level of asthma in France is half that in Britain and it varies widely around the world. The variation is partly attributed to differences in awareness and definition of wheezing but even after these are allowed for, researchers believe real differences remain which could be linked with diet, climate or other factors.

Paracetamol could stave off cancer

Painkillers bought over the counter can prevent cancer. Scientists have shown that aspirin and similar anti-inflammatory drugs used in the treatment of arthritis reduce the risk of bowel cancer. The mechanism is unclear but it is thought that the drugs may stop the production of chemicals in the intestine that are necessary to allow the cancer to grow.

Now scientists at the Brigham and Women's hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, have tested the effect of over-the-counter analgesics on ovarian cancer. They speculated that whatever mechanism was at work with aspirin in bowel cancer might also apply to other cancers, but they included questions about the use of paracetamol and ibuprofen in their study.

To their surprise, they found a positive link with paracetamol but no significant association with either aspirin or ibuprofen use. Women who took paracetamol regularly were half as likely to develop ovarian cancer as those who did not.

The numbers in the study, published in the *Lancet* medical journal, were small and the researchers stress that their findings are preliminary. They say the study must be replicated and the protective mechanism explained before any public health advice can be given.

A total of 563 women with ovarian cancer were compared with 523 from the general population and the researchers found that 26 of the cases (4.6 per cent) used paracetamol compared with 46 of the controls (8.8 per cent). The women with the lowest risk took paracetamol daily or had used it for more than 10 years.

The researchers say that paracetamol cannot work against cancer in the same way as aspirin. However, there is evidence from studies on rats that paracetamol suppresses the activity of the ovaries, which might account for its cancer-preventing effect.

Paracetamol is metabolised in the liver in a process that may require the chemical glutathione. This is also required for the release of follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) which is essential to achieve ovulation. The researchers suggest that if glutathione is taken up in metabolising paracetamol, it could result in depleted levels of FSH.

They say: "Until the validity of and mechanism for a possible association between paracetamol and ovarian cancer protection are better defined, this association cannot yet be regarded as one which would prompt a public health recommendation."

— Jeremy Laurence

Blow for chemists and drug makers as price fixing is referred to court

Drugs manufacturers and chemists may be forced to scrap price fixing for over-the-counter medicines after the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) yesterday called on the courts to settle the issue. The move comes after a long-running campaign by supermarket chain Asda for cuts in the price of non-prescription medicines.

The director-general of the OFT, John Bridgeman, has asked the Restrictive Practices Court to end resale price maintenance (RPM) on over-the-counter pharmaceuticals. Price fixing on prescription-only medicines was abolished in the Seventies.

Asda estimates that shoppers in the United Kingdom could save £300m a year if supermarkets and other retailers were allowed to sell a wide range of popular medicines below the price set by the makers.

But the pharmaceutical industry, backed by leading chemists' chains, says that thousands of community chemists could be forced to close if price fixing was scrapped.

In 1970, when the Restrictive Practices Court last looked at the issue, it allowed manufacturers to continue enforcing minimum prices for their branded products. Mr Bridgeman said there had been considerable change since then - in consumer behaviour, the nature of a chemist's business and the structure of the retail market - warranting a new review.

Asda, which in 1995 cut the price of 80 vitamin products only to restore them after manufacturers secured injunctions, welcomed the OFT's decision. A spokesman for the chain said yesterday: "This is something we have been waiting for and we

are delighted. Today marks the beginning of the end for price fixing in this country."

"The only disappointment is that [the case] will not be heard until 1999, which means another £300m that consumers will have to pay because of price fixing. That is the excess profit going to manufacturers and multiple chemists."

In 1970, the Restrictive Practices Court decided that without RPM supermarkets would stock a wider range of the more popular products and lower the prices, leading to fewer visits to chemists' shops at a time of decline. But the OFT said the number of chemists' shops was no longer declining and the main reason for consumers visiting them now was to collect prescriptions. The strong growth in the number of chains of chemist shops since 1970

would enable them to withstand price competition, it added.

Boots the Chemist said that it backed the smaller pharmacies in campaigning against abandoning price maintenance. Jan Wright, director of communications, said: "We feel the pricing system should remain. If it goes, small independent pharmacies will go to the wall and that is not in the public interest... people will always want the option of having a local chemist."

The Community Pharmacy Action Group, which was set up to lobby in favour of RPM, reacted angrily yesterday. Its chairman, David Sharpe, said: "This is clearly an attempt to subvert an agreement between the government and pharmacists. People's access to medicines and healthcare advice should be determined by elected politicians, not unelected placement."

Taking cocaine for science's sake

American scientists are giving drug addicts doses of cocaine and watching how their brains react on a scanner. By identifying the parts of the brain that react to the drug, and subsequently trigger craving for more, they hope to understand the chemistry of addiction.

All that could be seen of the addict were his socks sticking out of a brain scanner the size of a walk-in cupboard. He had been in there about an hour when a technician pushed a button and infused 40mg of cocaine into his bloodstream.

Two psychiatrists watched, along with a heart specialist, a drug counsellor and a nurse. For a minute and a half, nothing happened. Then the man's

heart rate began to rise to 90 beats per minute ... 130 ... 135. His blood pressure lifted sharply. A number came up on a computer screen. "He's getting maximal rush," said Dr Hans Breiter.

The man inside the scanner signalled that he was enjoying himself. His head immobilised and his ears plugged, he rated the experience on a scale of one to four. Four meant really good.

In this unusual experiment at Massachusetts General Hospital, scientists were looking inside a man's head to see what cocaine does. A souped-up Magnetic Resonance Imaging scanner, programmed to run faster than the kind used to take pictures of strokes or tumours, rattled off an image a second of the man's brain.

Within minutes the rush fell to 2, then 1. Then came less pleasant feelings. Low 2, the man reported. Low 3. He felt jittery and out of sorts. Finally the numbers began to rise

on another scale, his hunger for more. Craving 3.

Dr Breiter was relieved. There had been no need to yank the man out of the machine and jolt him with defibrillator paddles - something they had practised doing in 30 seconds in case the cocaine triggered a heart attack.

At about 10 pm, after promising he wouldn't go looking for more cocaine that night, the addict was sent home with a lecture about the dangers of drugs, an offer of drug rehabilitation and his payment, a \$260 (£160) credit at a supermarket.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse, headed by Dr Alan Leshner, is paying for this and similar experiments around America. Scientists hope that by observing exactly how cocaine gets people high and keeps them coming back for more, they will find clues to making medicines that can blunt these effects.

"That state of feeling good,

high, euphoria, buzz, whatever you call it, that's what we're after, and that's what users are after," said Dr Scott Lukas, who is doing some of the research at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts General doctors have counted 90 different parts of the brain that are turned on during cocaine's rush. But as the euphoria ebbs and the craving sets in, almost all of these fade out, leaving just a few distinct structures still working hard. "The picture emerging is that drugs take over structures that are involved in normal pleasure," said Dr Elliot Stein of the Medical College of Wisconsin.

The findings suggest that drug addiction is not just a failure of will but a brain disease - a lasting, perhaps permanent change in the brain's chemistry and physiology that produces compulsive craving. It also suggests possible approaches to making antidotes.

— Jeremy Laurence

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All smiles as Britain takes Euro-reins

Tony Blair yesterday kicked off Britain's European presidency with a pledge to be a constructive 'honest broker' in launch preparations for the single currency. But as Rupert Cornwell explains, awkward issues ranging from Turkey to the EU beef-ban could yet spoil the Prime Minister's Euro-show.

It was the traditional beaming start for an EU presidency, only more so - the descent en masse of the 20-man European Commission into the new incumbent's capital to map out the six

months ahead, but spiced this time by the undisputed delight of the Commission President, Jacques Santer, that he would be dealing not with Eurosceptic Tories, but with a new, keen Labour Government.

At a joint press conference, Mr Blair and Mr Santer, already on "Jacques" and "Tony" terms, rushed with quite sincere mutual enthusiasm. How "refreshing and appreciated" was Britain's new-found spirit of co-operation, Mr Santer said, and its desire to show how Europe could improve the lives of ordinary people.

The Prime Minister responded in similar vein. It was "a privilege" to take on the presidency at a moment when the EU would embark on two crucial steps: enlargement to the East, and the final prepa-



New title: Tony Blair at a London press conference yesterday on Britain's European presidency
Photograph: Lynne Sladky/AP

But this may not prevent friction between Labour's deregulatory, "welfare-to-work" philosophy and the interventionist, statist instincts of continental Europe.

On the single currency, however, not a word was breathed yesterday about last month's row over Britain's exclusion from the "Euro-X" club of countries which sign up for the euro.

But even from the sidelines, the Tories still snipe. In remarks that can only have intensified Mr Santer's relief at the change of guard in Downing Street, William Hague last night stepped up his campaign of hostility to the single currency, urging Mr Blair to block unprepared EU members from joining the euro.

In a speech to Teignbridge Tories, he said: "Britain is at the helm for the next six months. For a prime minister far more interested in doing what is popular rather than what is right, it will mean hard choices."

rations for the single currency. Although Britain was not joining in the first wave, it would be an honest broker, playing a "good constructive role" in the launch of the euro.

But as Britain gets into the

daily business of the presidency, the smiles could soon fade. Both men stressed the urgency of improving the EU's fraught relations with Turkey, already threatening major trouble for the accession of Cyprus to the

Union, and which could complicate efforts to find a solution to the Kurdish refugee crisis.

The EU's failure to lift its 21-month ban on British beef exports is a separate irritant. Progress had been "far slower

than I'd like," Mr Blair said, adding that "if science was the test, we should get some action and improvement. But he warned, "it would be unwise to be over-optimistic".

During the presidency, Mr

Blair and the other Cabinet ministers who chair EU meetings are supposed to be neutral, leaving the national interest to be defended by more junior officials occupying the normal British seat.

Police halt suicide cult's last supper

Police in the Canary Islands last night arrested a German psychologist and cult leader charged with planning the collective suicide of 32 followers, including five children aged from six to 12.

Members of the religious sect apparently planned to end their lives yesterday in the expectation that a spaceship would carry them away from the summit of Mt Teide, a volcano in Tenerife.

Heide Fittkau-Garthe, 56, from Berlin, had lived on the island for a decade and police had been investigating her followers, who were all Germans except one Spanish woman, for several months. The sect believed that the world was to end last night and that they would be transported to a new world.

Police picked up clothing, illustrations and documents from the followers, said to be middle-class men and women, including university graduates, aged between 20 and 60.

A government spokesman said the sect centred around the personality of their leader, who homed in on her followers' personality weaknesses and induced them to pay up to £300 to participate in meetings. Some members had apparently arrived in Tenerife in recent weeks

after bidding farewell to their families "until the next world".

Police believe the sect is a splinter group of the Solar Temple suicide cult, whose followers have carried out mass suicides in Canada, France and Switzerland. Dr Fittkau-Garthe's disciples were staging a "last supper" at a private residence in the city of Santa Cruz de Tenerife before police intervened.

"Inducement to suicide is a crime, and for that reason the security forces had to avoid this evil thing," Antonio Lopez Ojeda, a Canaries government official, said yesterday. "It is not even clear which branch the sect is, whether it is the so-called Solar Temple cult or whether it is a splinter of this group... many types are possible, based on the personality of the leader."

If convicted, Dr Fittkau-Garthe faces four to eight years in prison. In 1994, 48 members of the Order of the Solar Temple died in murder-suicides in Switzerland. Five more members died the same year in Canada, followed by 16 others in the French Alps in 1995 and five more in Canada last March. Thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult committed suicide last March at a mansion outside San Diego.

— Elizabeth Nash

Jospin to boost benefits in bid to end jobless unrest

The French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, is expected today to promise short-term and long-term improvements to benefits for the jobless in an attempt to halt a spreading campaign of protest by the long-term unemployed. Last night he met leaders of the protest, which has begun to threaten the credibility and unity of the Socialist-Green-Communist coalition which has governed France since June.

The protesters' central requests include a £300 end-of-year bonus, an improvement in unemployment pay of the 1,200,000 long-term unemployed and more emergency help for people in acute difficulties. Mr Jospin is expected to offer more public money to help the insolvent unemployment insurance agency meet the last demand. He may also offer longer-term reforms of the system to give more help to unemployed people to re-train for new jobs.

— John Uchfield, Paris

Police discuss Kurd influx

European police chiefs began discussing a plan to deal with a wave of Kurdish immigrants landing in Italy, and rights groups, including Amnesty, urged Rome to grant all Kurds temporary asylum. The talks between police chiefs and security officials from Turkey and six EU states - Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Italy - were aimed at co-ordinating a Europe-wide response to the arrival of 2,000 Turkish and Iraqi Kurds in Italy in the past four weeks. Bonn has reacted with alarm to the influx of Kurds, believing they intended to join family and friends among the Kurdish community already in Germany. Italy has described them as refugees and said it would examine asylum requests on an individual basis.

— Reuters, Rome

Journalist deaths drop

Twenty-six journalists were killed around the world last year in the course of their work, with India and Colombia the most dangerous countries. The annual report by Reporters without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists said it marked the third consecutive drop after an especially deadly 1994, in which 103 journalists were killed.

Seven journalists died in India last year, four in Colombia, three in Mexico, and two in Cambodia. For the first time since 1993, no journalist was killed in Algeria, despite worsening civil strife.

— Reuters, Paris

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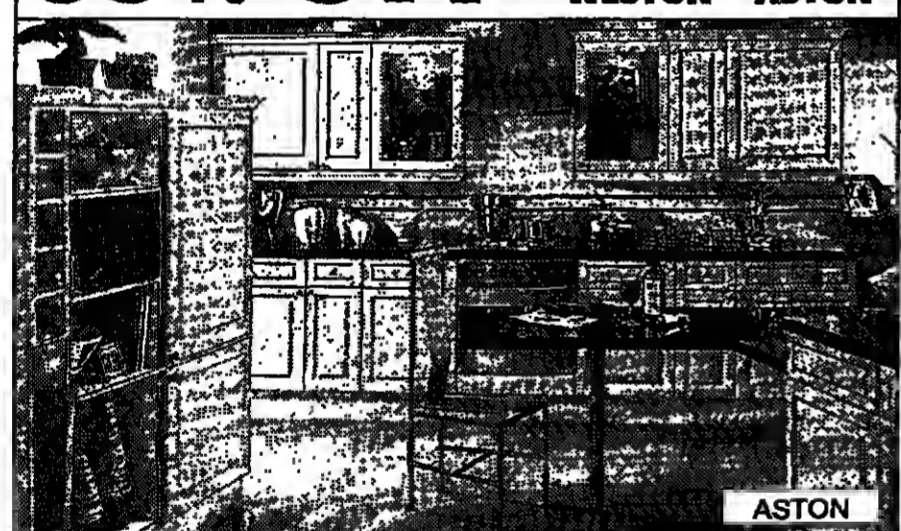


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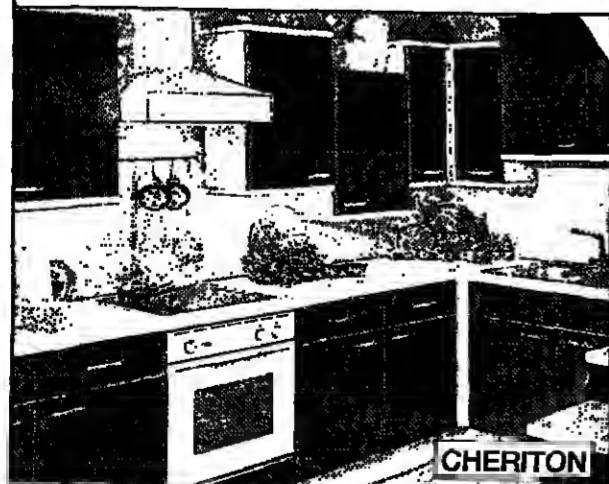
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Algeria opening door to international massacre probe

The European Union last night accelerated plans for a fact-finding mission to Algeria, Rupert Cornwell reports, amid signs that Algiers may be softening its previous flat refusal of an outside inquiry into the massacres.

As the slaughter of civilians continued. Middle East experts met in Brussels yesterday to discuss a possible "troika" mission of senior officials from Luxembourg, Britain and Austria—the previous, present and future holders of the EU Presidency—with the German foreign minister claiming that Algiers had already given a "positive reaction" to the proposal.

In London, meanwhile, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said Europe must establish how it could help in finding a way to end the bloodshed, which has taken at least 1,000 lives in the first 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan alone, and perhaps 70,000 or more since the civil war between the regime and Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas began in 1992.

Until yesterday, there was scant sign that Algiers would give its blessing, essential for any international initiative to get off the ground. Once again on Wednesday, the authorities issued a "categorical rejection of any attempt to interfere in its internal affairs", saying an investigation would only plant doubts over the source of terrorism, "a stance Algeria con-

demns and absolutely rejects". But there are now hints it could countenance a less clear cut step. Apart from anything agreed with the EU, some form of UN mission remains possible while—according to officials in Ottawa yesterday—the military regime is willing to receive a Canadian envoy who would urge the Algerian government to be more open about the mas-

sacres. Allegations are ever more frequent that some of these took place with the passive connivance, if not active complicity, of the security forces. Such suggestions, however, only infuriate the Algerian government, which insists the carnage is exclusively the work of the fundamentalists, the most ferocious group of which is the

GIA, the Armed Islamic Group. The GIA is believed to be behind the unprecedented weekend slaughter in the western Relizane province, which took a reported 400 lives, and for three subsequent attacks which left 62 dead. The army is conducting a massive search operation in the region, but with no word of real success. So great is the hu-

man devastation that the Algerian Government announced it is sending 50 tonnes of food, tents and blankets to survivors, "the victims of collective massacres by criminal groups of defenceless civilian populations". In the end, perhaps, it may be humanitarian work that gives outsiders a foot in the Algerian door.

Bhutto assets to be seized

Millions of pounds of assets and documents held in Britain said to belong to Benazir Bhutto, the deposed Pakistani prime minister, and her husband, are expected to be seized after the Government agreed to assist an anti-corruption investigation by Pakistan.

Officers from Scotland Yard are expected to help gather evidence in Britain which can be held for use in any future trial.

The move follows an appeal by the Pakistan government to the Home Office to help it with its investigations into claims that the Mrs Bhutto and her husband earned a fortune through corruption and drug-dealing.

Mrs Bhutto, sacked as prime minister in November 1996 on disputed charges of corruption and misuse, has denied charges by Pakistani officials that she siphoned out millions of pounds and accuses them of starting a "media trial" to defame her family.

Members of Pakistan's anti-corruption unit are believed to have asked the British government to freeze three bank accounts in London allegedly used by Asif Zardari, the former prime minister's husband.

Senator Saifur Rahman, Pakistan's senior corruption investigator, said yesterday that Britain had been asked for "mutual bilateral legal assistance". Mr Rahman claimed that as much as \$2bn may be held in various accounts.

The Home Office yesterday confirmed it had agreed to co-operate with the Pakistan authorities, although it has only been asked about material relating to Mrs Bhutto's husband.

— Jason Bennett



Cash dances: Staff of Samsung Life Insurance acting out their refusal to listen to any more doom and gloom over South Korea's economic crisis. The company ordered them to do the dance in a central Seoul street yesterday to boost the morale of salesmen. Photograph: Paul Barker/Reuters

White House sets scene for a softer approach to Iran

The White House yesterday opened the way for a tentative softening of United States policy towards Iran in response to the Iranian President's television interview on Wednesday evening.

The White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, said that the text of the interview, in which President Khatami called for contacts through popular diplomacy, but ruled out government-to-government contacts in the first instance, was being studied by foreign policy advisers. Stressing that any improvement in relations "depends upon not just what Iran says but what Iran does", Mr McCurry also said: "We believe that President Khatami made many very positive remarks about the United States... But it's also important to stress that the best way for issues to be addressed is for governments to talk directly." There was a generally favourable reception for Mr Khatami's performance in Iran. After almost two decades of official vilification of the US, his positive assessment of American civilisation was seen as a brave, and perhaps risky, departure.

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

Governor quits over killings

The pre-Christmas massacre of 45 Indian peasants in the Mexican state of Chiapas has claimed another political victim. Chiapas governor Julio Cesar Ruiz Ferro, of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), resigned on Wednesday following criticism that he had been warned of a massacre but did nothing to prevent it. Ernesto Zedillo, the Mexican President, last weekend sacked his interior minister, Emilio Chayfetz, who was responsible for peace negotiations in Chiapas. The south-eastern state is split between sympathisers of the PRI, and supporters of Zapatista rebels seeking a better deal for impoverished Indian peasants. The Zapatista leader, Subcomandante Marcos, warned that armed conflict could erupt "at any moment".

— Phil Davison

Red Cross launches appeal

The Red Cross yesterday launched a \$170m (£106m) appeal to fund its activities in 56 countries around the world.

In recent years, the International Federation of the Red Cross has focused on the plight of refugees. Now, the emphasis is more on disaster and disease. All too often, it says, "the consequences of catastrophe... can be traced to uncontrolled urban development and environmental abuse". The incidence of disease and the breakdown of public health networks is an increasing concern.

Prime Minister set for a double act on visit to Japan

Tony Blair arrives in Tokyo today for a five-day trip during which he will play a dual role, as salesman for Britain, and (through Britain's presidency of the EU) as the high representative of Europe.

On one hand he will need to blow Britain's trumpet at the expense of its European partners,

emphasising, for example, Britain's low labour costs and attractiveness as a site for inward investment. On the other hand, he will also be advertising the EU as a crucial partner, not least in the run-up to monetary union. Mr Blair will be in the paradoxical position of selling the joys of EMU on behalf

of the European Union, while Britain continues to hesitate about signing on the dotted line.

Mr Blair will also address the problems of former wartime prisoners of Japan, who are demanding compensation. But Britain has made it clear it will not put Japan under pressure on the issue. — Steve Crawshaw

THE INDEPENDENT

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Sir Frank Roberts

Frank Kenyon Roberts, diplomat born Buenos Aires 27 October 1907; Charge d'Affaires to the Czechoslovak Government 1943; Minister, HM Embassy Moscow 1945-47; CMG 1946, KCMG 1953, GCMG 1963; Principal Private Secretary to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1947-49; Deputy High Commissioner (UK), India 1949-51; Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office 1951-54; ambassador to Yugoslavia 1954-57; UK Permanent Representative, North Atlantic Council 1957-60; ambassador to the Soviet Union 1960-62; ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany 1963-68; GCVO 1965; UK Member, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Review Committee on Overseas Representation 1968-69; married 1937 Celeste Shoucair (died 1990); died London 7 January 1998.

Roberts was from the first a high-flier. He passed out top in the Foreign Office entrance examination in 1930 (coming second in the wider Home and Indian Civil Service exam), and by the time he was appointed Minister in Moscow was still only 38. At the 1948 talks on the Berlin blockade his fellow negotiators were the very much senior American and French representatives, General Bedell Smith and Yves Chataigneau. He possessed outstanding intelligence and was a master of the "think-piece" despatch. In response to a Foreign Office request for an assessment of Soviet policy in 1946, Roberts submitted in short order three despatches which were in substance a *tour de force*. Constituting a comprehensive and illuminating analysis, they revealed a sound grasp of the history of Russian foreign policy and a unique knowledge of the Soviet press.

When Frank Roberts first met Stalin towards the end of 1945 Stalin's first words were, "I know you. You are our enemy. And what's more you are a member of the British intelligence service." Shaken by the encounter, Roberts who was at that time Minister at the British Embassy in Moscow, left the room wondering whether he had not better ask for a transfer back to London by the next plane.

Roberts joined the Foreign Office in the days when a young entrant's first obligation was not only to purchase a diplomatic uniform, but also court dress, including knee breeches for palace levees and a special household evening coat for dinners with royalty present. Roberts recalled that all this, together with an ostrich feather hat, evening shoes, a cloak and overcoat, could then be purchased with a grant of £100.

On reflection, Roberts concluded that Stalin had had in mind his wartime activities in the Central Department of the Foreign Office in London where one of his primary duties had been to support the Polish cause, often against what Stalin considered to be Soviet interests. Roberts was also reassured to be told by a Russian friend that Stalin had paid him a great compliment in "promoting" him to the British Intelligence service.

His first overseas posting was to Paris in 1932, where the then ambassador was the immensely well-respected Lord Tyrrell. As one of the few young secretaries who played golf and bridge, Roberts got to know him well. Tyrrell rarely did more than initial papers submitted to him and when, on one occasion, a file was returned to him with a note concluding "This requires a decision", he confined himself to writing "Yes, it does."

Several years later, in 1948, Roberts found himself on the opposite side of the table to Stalin in negotiations for the lifting of the Berlin blockade. He was by that time Principal Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, and had been sent back to Moscow as Bevin's personal representative at the talks. Looking back, Roberts considered this to be one of the most interesting events of his long career.

One of Roberts's duties at the Paris Embassy was to keep in touch with Stanley Baldwin's Parliamentary Private Secretary, Geoffrey Lloyd. In London Roberts was taken by Lloyd to the House of Commons to hear the debate on air rearmament in which Baldwin dismissed Churchill's statistics on the scope and speed of German air rearmament. Afterwards, Roberts heard everyone congratulating Baldwin on his speech.



'Dealing with dictators': the irrepressible Roberts was a high-flier from the first

diplomacy. Although Egypt was not a part of the British Empire, the British had special rights there, and Roberts was Private Secretary to the powerful High Commissioner, Sir Miles Lampson (later Lord Killearn). It was an enjoyable posting not least because it was in Cairo that he met his wife, Cella, daughter of the late Sir Said Shoucair Pasha, Financial Adviser to the Sudan Government.

Two years later Roberts was recalled to London and assigned to the Central Department of the Foreign Office, so called because it dealt with Central Europe and more especially with Germany, whose activities were already posing a major problem for Britain. Roberts's work brought him into close contact with Anthony Eden and Lord Halifax as Foreign Secretaries, and with

Chamberlain and Churchill at 10 Downing Street. Before the outbreak of war, it was Roberts who carried all the secret communications from the disaffected German Chief of General Staff, General Beck, to Neville Chamberlain. Beck was persistently warning the British and the French of Hitler's expansionist intentions. Chamberlain dismissed the messages as part of a Foreign Office campaign to make him change his policy of appeasement.

and Czechoslovakia, Portugal and Spain. During the phoney war he also acted as Secretary to the Supreme War Council, and was then responsible for settling in Britain the Allied governments from occupied Europe.

Roberts acted as interpreter between Churchill and General de Gaulle at some of their most important and difficult meetings. At one, he recalled, Churchill was furious with de Gaulle over the seizure by the Free French of islands in the St Lawrence estuary. When de Gaulle made no attempt to explain matters, but politely took his leave, Churchill remarked, "That was very well done. I couldn't have done it better myself."

In 1942 Roberts was responsible for the organisation of the high-level conference at St James's Palace on the question of war crimes. The conference, held at the initiative of General Sikorski, was attended by all the Allied governments in London (with the British and Americans as observers), and resulted in the modifications in international law that eventually led to the Nuremberg trials.

In 1943 he spent seven weeks in Lisbon with the British ambassador, Sir Ronald Campbell, in negotiations with Dr Salazar for an Allied airbase in the Azores. Salazar conducted the talks at his home with no one but Campbell and Roberts in the room. Roberts was fascinated by this glimpse of a dictator in action, and considered the experience as instructive as his post-war negotiations with Stalin on the Berlin blockade.

At the end of 1944 Roberts was appointed Minister in Moscow, attending the Yalta Conference en route to his new posting. His new ambassador, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr (later Lord Inverchapel), had as his passport photograph a portrait in oils of himself as a young man and kept a few geese to supply the quill pens he continued to use. Roberts's arrival in the Moscow Chancery in 1945 was felt by one contemporary, Tommy (later Lord) Brimelow, to mark its final emergence from the 18th century.

adviser on a commission consisting of the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, and the American and British ambassadors. He also dealt with issues on Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary.

In 1948 Roberts was back in London as PPS to Ernest Bevin. He found Bevin a delight to work for and, with others, grew to regard him as the greatest of Britain's modern Foreign Secretaries. Bevin, who liked to run things himself and not to be run by his Private Secretary, was rumoured to find Roberts's irrepressible activity slightly irritating but none the less recognised his precocious talent.

When the British ambassador in Moscow fell ill in 1948, Bevin sent Roberts as his personal representative to talks with Stalin on the Berlin blockade, an exceptional honour for a junior official. While Roberts always accepted that policy is laid down by governments, and therefore never exaggerated his role as negotiator, the eventual result of the talks was the end of the Berlin airlift.

Roberts found that Stalin and Molotov conducted the talks in a forthright way, although inevitably there were difficult moments. While Molotov, Roberts recalled, "when angry used to turn pea-green and stammer", General Bedell Smith discovered the best technique for dealing with Stalin, who invariably appeared in his generalissimo uniform, was the "We generals together" approach.

In 1949 Roberts was appointed Deputy High Commissioner in India, his only posting outside Europe. Two years later he returned to London as Deputy Under-Secretary of State responsible for German affairs. One of his first duties was to submit recommendations for the revision of sentences imposed at the Nuremberg trials on war criminals below Hitler's immediate circle, from General Manstein down.

without Soviet participation, in West Germany.

After an agreeable two years as ambassador to Tito's Yugoslavia, in February 1957 Roberts was posted to Paris as the British Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council. Major political issues arising during his tenure were the Budapest, Suez and Cyprus crises and the U-2 incident. A persistent concern in NATO's internal affairs was how to bring Germany fully into the Alliance.

In 1960 Roberts returned to Moscow as ambassador. By then Khrushchev had outmanoeuvred Georgi Malenkov in the bid for the Soviet leadership, and Roberts got to know him well. Unlike Stalin, Khrushchev liked to conduct relations directly with Western ambassadors, and he also loved to go to parties. As a result, a week rarely went by when Roberts did not have the opportunity to converse with him at length.

During two years in Moscow Roberts entertained 6,000 people at the embassy. His last meeting with Khrushchev took place shortly after the Cuba missile crisis, the main event of his posting in Moscow. Khrushchev, on whose instructions the Berlin Wall had recently been built, already knew that Roberts was going as ambassador to Bonn, and talked to him for two hours, mostly about his admiration for the Germans.

Five years as ambassador to Bonn from 1963 marked the summit of Roberts's career. The post of ambassador included the role of Head of the British Military Government in Berlin, which Roberts made a point of visiting once a month. His time at the embassy coincided with the Queen's highly successful state visit to Germany, first proposed by Roberts to Rah Butler in the wake of President Kennedy's famous visit to Berlin.

On retirement Roberts was invited by Michael Stewart to join the Foreign Secretary's Review Committee on Overseas Representation, better known as the Duncan Committee. A small group with three members, the committee completed a wide-ranging influential set of recommendations on Foreign Office reforms within nine months. In 1991 Roberts published his memoirs, *Dealing with Dictators*.

— George Ireland

Fr Raymond Bruckberger

Raymond Léopold Bruckberger, monk, writer and cineast born Murat, Switzerland 10 April 1907; ordained priest 1934; died Fribourg, Switzerland 4 January 1998.

First World War who had been prominent in certain Fascist movements. The two became friends. Bruckberger was wounded at Chantilly and was taken prisoner.

Raymond Bruckberger entered the Dominican order in 1929, when he was aged 22. Many have been surprised to learn that he was still a Dominican. It is rare to find someone who combined such individualism with such a sense of Christianity as a collective form of worship. He was both a revolutionary and a traditionalist, an iconoclast and a devoted believer. It must be added that he was at one and the same time a legendary, heroic figure and a ridiculous exhibitionist.

He escaped in July 1940 and made his way to Nice, where he found Darnand, who had also escaped from his prisoner-of-war camp. They worked together to create a League of Ex-Servicemen, believing that it was through their patriotism that France would recover and would free itself from the control of unworthy politicians. Together they made speeches at the inaugural ceremony of the Legion.

Bruckberger was arrested in 1942. There was a rumour that he was to be shot or transferred to an extermination camp. When Darnand learned of this he immediately went to Paris and asked the German representative to France, Otto Abetz, to spare his friend. It was probably as a result of this intervention that Bruckberger was sent to prison for only five months.

On his release, Bruckberger took refuge in the Vivarais hills in the Massif Central, where he became close friends with Albert Camus, who was living there. Typically Bruckberger made contact with the cineast Robert Bresson, who had just returned from his prisoner-of-war camp, and he helped him to make the film *Les Anges du Péché*, with which the writer Jean Giraudoux also collaborated. The subject was a convent, lost in a forest; Bruckberger was able to justify his activities in the production of this film and thereby camouflage his role in the Resistance.

This became all the more important when, at the time when de Gaulle was trying unsuccessfully to persuade a bishop to join the ranks of Free France (by then, officially Fighting France), it was decided that the Resistance movement should have its chaplain, Alexandre Parodi, who was in charge of Gaullist resistance whilst working on a policy of social benefits for Vichy, appointed Bruckberger as chaplain of the Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur.

Thus it was, when the population of Paris first rose against the Germans on 19 August 1944, that Bruckberger became a familiar sight, cycling in his white Dominican robes which soon became black with smoke and dirt, going from one site of fighting to another, carrying out his missions as chaplain.

At the same time he was preparing for the triumphant entry of de Gaulle which should include a mass of liberation. He wanted this ceremony to take place in the Church of Notre Dame des Victoires since in this way de Gaulle would avoid all contact with Cardinal Suhard in Notre Dame de Paris. There the Cardinal had received not only Petain but also the German commander in Paris. But de Gaulle let it be known that he intended to go to Notre Dame de Paris. Therefore Bruckberger let it be known that the presence of the Cardinal in his church was undesirable.

Thus the strangest scene of the Liberation occurred on 26 August 1944 when General de Gaulle entered the cathedral and made his way towards the altar. Firing broke out both inside and outside Notre Dame, the General stood upright, many of the crowd behind him lay on the floor for protection, the organ was unable to play because there was no electricity, and in the sacristy the senior clergy of Paris were arguing with Bruckberger as to the propriety of excluding the Cardinal-Archbishop.

After this date Bruckberger enjoyed being a Parisian. He was seen, still wearing his battle-grimy robes, in the Rumerie Martiniquaise on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, in the company of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. He denounced the growing Communist influence. He attacked the Social Catholic Party that had emerged from the Resistance. But he tried to appease some of the more ferocious aspects of the settlement of accounts that was an inevitable part of the Liberation. Notably, when his old friend Darnand was condemned to death by the High Court of Paris in 1945, he attended him in his cell at Fresnes every morning until the day of his execution.

After these years it is difficult to assess his influence. For a time he was Chaplain to the Foreign Legion and served in North Africa. When Georges Pompidou became President of the Republic in 1979 he undoubtedly played a role as spiritual adviser. He intervened in favour of the former Vichy official Paul Touvier, and might well have been instrumental in procuring a pardon for the man who was to be arrested in 1989 and later found guilty of crimes against humanity. He also wrote about the role of the Church in society.

There were many quarrels; with the Pope over the Second Vatican Council, for example. There were many scandals, notably the presence of an American mistress named Barbara, or his holiday on the Greek islands with Albert Camus in 1958, when he dressed as a check-shirted cowboy. For some he became known as "the good-time monk".

He retired to Switzerland in 1962. He continued to produce many books, including *Au Diable Père Bruck* ("To the Devil Father Bruck") in 1986.

— Douglas Johnson



Bruckberger: 'the good-time monk', whose finest hour was the Second World War

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS
MURRAY: Sir Donald, KCVO CMG DL, died peacefully on 8 January, aged 73. Beloved husband of Marjorie, much-loved father of Jim, Gilly, Neil and Alex and grandfather of nine. Funeral service to be held at St Mary the Virgin, Rye, at 1.30pm on Friday 16 January. No flowers please, but charitable donations, if desired, to Rye Health & Care Ltd, c/o Ellis Bros (Funeral Directors), 3 Ferry Road, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7DD. Memorial service, in London, to be announced later.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr M. Smith and Miss R. C. A. Hucknall
The engagement is announced between Rebecca, daughter of Mr and Mrs N.G. Hucknall, of West Heath, West Sussex, and Michael, elder son of Mr E. Smith, of Peterleigh, Durham, and Mrs P. Andrew, of Hailsham, East Sussex.

Birthdays

Major Derek Allousen, former and Olympic equestrian, 84; Sir John Alford, High Court judge, 66; Dame Elizabeth Anson (Lady Anson), former chairman, Association of District Councils of England and Wales, 67; Miss Joan Baez, singer, 57; Mr Hugh Bayley MP, 46; Miss Mary Bennett, former Principal, St Hilda's College, Oxford, 85; Mr Paul Berge, former ambassador to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, 61; Mr Ken Brown, golfer, 41; Sir John Buckley, former chairman, Davy Corporation, 85; Mrs Christine Crawley, MEP, 48; Mr Clive Dunn, actor and comedian, 76; Sir Tony Durant, former MP, 70; Sir Graham Eyre QC, a Recorder of the Crown Court, 67; Mr Graham Fletcher, show jumper, 47; Mr Michael Gifford, former managing director and chief executive, Rank Organisation, 62; Father Benedict Green, theologian, 74; Mr Terry Hands, theatre and opera director, 57; Mr David Holbrook, writer, 75; Mr Leslie Holliday, former chairman, John Laing Construction, 77; Mr Raymond Horrocks, chairman, Chirside Group, 68; Professor Sir Alec Jeffreys, Wolfson Research Professor of the Royal Society, Leicester University, 48; Sir Michael Jenkins, former ambassador to the Netherlands, 62; Mr Simon Jervis, Historic Buildings Secretary, National Trust, 55; Mr Herbert Lom, actor, 81; Mr Michael Nicholson, television newscaster and reporter, 61; Sir Harry Ognall QC, High Court judge, 64; Miss Joely Richardson, actress, 33; Mr David Smith, cricketer, 42; Mrs Vicky Tuck, Principal, Cheltenham Ladies College, 45; Mr David Walker, High Commissioner to Bangladesh, 58; The Right Rev Francis West, former Bishop Suffragan of Tunstun, 58; Mr Geoffrey Wigg,

horse trainer, 68; Miss Susanah York, actress, 50.

Anniversaries

Births John Jones, Earl of St Vincent, admiral, 1735; Lucille Abercrombie, poet and critic, 1881; Dame Gracie Fields (Grace Stansfield), singer and actress, 1898; Simone Lucie Ernestine-Marie de Beauvoir, novelist and critic, 1908; Richard Nixon, 37th US President, 1913; Gypsy Rose Lee (Rose Louise Banks), actress and strip-tease artist, 1914; Deaths: Katherine Mansfield (Beauchamp, Kathleen Middleton Murry), writer, 1923; Karl Mannheim, sociologist, 1947; Waldo David Frank, novelist, 1947. On this day: Jean-Pierre Blanchard, aeronaut, made the first balloon ascent in America, near Woodbury, New Jersey, 1793; In Britain, Income Tax was introduced by William Pitt the Younger, the rate being two shillings in the pound, 1799; Sir Humphry Davy's safety lamp was first used in a coal mine, 1816; the first trial flight of Concorde took place, Bristol, 1969. Today is the Feast Day of St Berthwald of Canterbury, Saints Julian and Basilissa, St Marciann of Ruscut, St Peter of Sebastia and St Wainigus or Vaincus.

Lectures

National Gallery: Alexander Sturge, "Courtauld Loans (ii): Giovanni Bellini. The Assassination of Saint Peter Martyr", 1pm.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 3.57pm.
United Synagogue: 0181-343 8989.
Federation of Synagogues: 0181-202 2263.
Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-581 1643.
Reform Synagogue of Great Britain: 0181-349 4731.
Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573.
New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-328 1026.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of York, Patron, launches the 1998 Year of Photography and the Electronic Image at the Imperial War Museum, 11.30am. The Duke of York's Initiative at Ashkenazi Synagogue, York, will, to mark the 100th Year of Photography and the Electronic Image, present a reception at the Mansion House, York.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. The Battalion Welsh Guards, minus the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Grenadier Guards.

Announcements for BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Funerals and Weddings) should be sent to the Editor, The Independent, 1, Cannon Row, London EC1A 3DF. (For details of the service, please telephone 0171-202 2263 or fax 0171-202 2268, and are charged at £6.50 a line plus VAT. 10p per line. All notices must be submitted in writing (or typed) and are charged at £20 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.)

16/LEADER & LETTERS

Yes, Ms Mowlam, enter the Maze – and try to find a way out of the impasse



EDITOR: ANDREW MARR.
DEPUTY EDITOR: COLIN HUGHES.
ADDRESS: 1 CANADA SQUARE,
CANARY WHARE,
LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE: 0171 293 2000
OR 0171 345 2000
FAX: 0171 293 2435
OR 0171 345 2435

Ms Mowlam's decision to visit the Maze prison to talk to convicted murderers so astonished the BBC's Ireland Editor that he described it as "staggering" in a news report. This sudden intrusion of tabloid adjectival excess into the corporation's sober and careful reporting was one way, at least, of marking a historic moment. What he meant was that this was something so far outside the trammings of Northern Ireland's assumptions that he had run out of words with which to describe it. In a region well used to the demands of extreme language to name various forms of killing and other brutality, he was rendered inarticulate by Ms Mowlam's political quickstep.

What he could not say was: "A Cabinet minister, going to plead with jailed terrorists to maintain their support for the ceasefire?" Of course, she says she will not be pleading, but the truth is that the Secretary of State is treating people convicted of terrible crimes as legitimate partners in the peace process. Any right-thinking person should be brought up short by that:

it runs against all the assumptions of liberal democracy.

But there was a dissonance between the BBC's language of the "unprecedented", the "brave" and the "desperate", and the quietness of the response from all the parties gathered around (and about) the peace talks table. Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing, welcomed Ms Mowlam's decision, although she was going in to the segregated Maze to talk to the other side. David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, said he could hardly criticise it, because he had just been in the Maze himself to talk to the loyalist paramilitaries.

The other thing the BBC could not say was that Ms Mowlam is absolutely right. The principle of not talking to terrorists was abandoned, rightly, by John Major's government. It remains a condition for taking part in peace talks that the parties must formally renounce violence. But prisoners wield much of the power in paramilitary organisations on both sides of the sectarian divide. Following the murder in the

Maze of Billy Wright, the Loyalist Volunteer Force leader, there is no doubt that it is on the loyalist prisoners that leverage now needs to be applied if the peace process is to carry on.

And this newspaper makes no apology for agreeing with Ms Mowlam that the peace process is "the only show in town". We seem to have upset *The Daily Telegraph* by being rather brisk with its silly and shrill demand for Ms Mowlam to resign over the Wright killing. Yesterday, it took this paper to task for emphasising the single word "process", which it regards as an attempt to mystify appeasement of terrorism. Well, we do set much store by the word. In the phrase "peace process" it may be that the second word is the more important. So long as the representatives of Northern Ireland's people are talking to each other, however tentatively, there is some prospect of the habit of not killing each other growing.

Of course, there is a logical incompatibility between the aspirations of re-

publicans and unionists, which can never satisfactorily be resolved. But that should not mean closing our minds and hiding behind that cynical and contemptible phrase, "an acceptable level of violence" – which is, frankly, the only alternative. And, of course, it may well be that this peace process will founder; that Ms Mowlam's boldness will go unrewarded. But meanwhile fewer people are being killed, and greater understanding is being fostered, than if we listened to the "anti-appeasers" of the English right wing.

It is accepted, especially by Ms Mowlam herself, that she is taking a risk in going to the Maze today – though the real risk is simply that she has set a precedent in the event of failure. If the peace process collapses and the killing resumes, there is a danger that any bunch of deluded murderers will think they can summon the Secretary of State to their cells to talk terms.

But she is right to go because there is a feeling among unionists in general, and

those who have in the past resorted to violence in particular – whether or not it is justified, is irrelevant – that their community is not being heard. All the attention in the early part of the peace process has been focused on Sinn Féin, many of whose negotiators have served prison sentences for terrorist offences. She knows that, and that is why she is being, not merely appearing to be, even-handed.

It is, as Suzanne Moore comments on the opposite page, one of Ms Mowlam's political strengths that, as a woman, she may find it easier to break out of the trammings of Northern Ireland politics and disrupt expectations. But there is also a downside, which is that much of the unionist hostility to her is born of chauvinism. The vocal supporters of hard-line unionism in the English press also tend to tread on the edge of cheap sexism. She must press on regardless. Let us hope that the hard men of Ulster will respond in a more responsible manner than London's little unionists.

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LETTERS

Hopes for Ulster

Sir: The press and the BBC are full of worries that the Northern Ireland negotiations may break down because of the events in the Maze and revenge killings.

Things are bound to get worse before they can get better. That they are getting worse, in day-to-day incidents, may even be a sign that they are getting better, for the simple reason that those fanatics who want no compromise will do all they can to wreck it.

Better not to get caught by the extremists in the day-to-day reporting of incidents but also to feature what the outcome of negotiations is likely to be. The leaders would not have gone so far if they did not intend compromise, even if it takes time for their party activists to see that there is no other way out. They do know that the ordinary people in both communities got sick to death of the Troubles. That led to the ceasefires, and the feeling is still there.

The sad thing is that the only possible compromises that can "square the circle" of unionism and nationalism are very little different than at Sunningdale over 25 years ago: a parliament elected by PR, a power-sharing executive, rolling devolution of powers as mutual agreement is reached, a Bill of Rights, equal status for the symbols of Ulster's two traditions, and a periodic referendum on "some form of unity".

The most difficult to agree will be the periodicity of a border poll. But it would put the big question off for a future generation to decide. Each set of leaders will air a different view on the probable outcome. Hume and Adams will count on the popular belief in the Catholic birth-rate (which demographers now question). Trimble and the loyalist leaders have a present majority and will know that about a quarter of the Catholic population tell pollsters that they do not want a united Ireland (but they may be waiting to see, quite sensibly, what is in the package economically).

I read or hear no such discussion of eventual outcomes, only over-reaction to daily incidents created by wreckers, or else bleak pessimism that only force can prevail – I mean "the security solution", which has failed, but so has the IRA's attempt to force surrender.

Professor BERNARD CRICK
Edinburgh



PRIESTLEY

Sir: The recent increase in tension in Northern Ireland has provoked a lot of gloom but perhaps this is misplaced. The loyalist paramilitaries are most exercised by the lack of movement on the prisoners issue. That issue is emotive but politically it is among the easiest of those facing the British government in Northern Ireland.

A great deal of confidence can be built relatively straightforwardly. Why doesn't the Secretary of State declare her intention to allow a limited amnesty for all paramilitary organisations that stick to their current ceasefire, effective from, say, three months after the conclusion of the talks in May?

It is time for a bold gesture to clear the air and restore momentum to the peace process. But an impromptu visit to the Maze is probably not the answer.

N D MARTIN-CLARK
London N8

Tories and Europe

Sir: The Conservative Party entered last year's general election with an untenable fence-sitting compromise on European economic and monetary union. It alienated a key segment of its core vote, reducing its percentage of the poll so much that Labour's 43 per cent of the vote translated into an unnecessary landslide victory.

Some of those who prevented the last government from adopting a principled policy of opposition to EMU now say that they "will support Tony Blair" on this crucial issue (letter, 5 January).

In answer to a question in the Commons on 15 December, the Prime Minister declared that "we should judge whether we enter monetary union according to our national interest, and that is defined by the economic tests that we have set".

Most Conservatives who oppose EMU do so as much for

political reasons as for economic ones; but the Labour government's position means that – provided that their economic tests are passed – there is no loss of political sovereignty or independence which would prevent them from joining EMU.

It is sad to see parliamentarians of any party encouraging such a danger to democracy.

Dr JULIAN LEWIS MP
(New Forest East, C)
DESMOND SWAYNE MP
(New Forest West, C)
LAURENCE ROBERTSON MP
(Tewkesbury, C)
House of Commons
London SW1

Sir: The appallingly blinkered letter you published from a number of Conservative ex-ministers in favour of economic and monetary union placed EMU at the heart of Europe and favoured European dogma against British priorities. You can see why the electorate rejected them in

May last year. If they are so keen on Mr Blair, let them join his party.

Although Maastricht requires economic convergence by intending EMUists, only Britain seems likely to meet the tests without cooking the books. For EMU to be a success requires sustained convergence. The improbability of this, taken with the way we predominantly trade

outside Europe, the way our businesses use equity finance instead of being owned largely by big banks, the size of our financial services sector, and the way people here buy houses with variable-rate loans, all argue for ongoing strain and hardship if ever we were mad enough to go in.

The inability of a country under EMU to rely on the markets to change the price of its currency when this is required during the economic cycle means that "fiscal transfers" to or from other countries will be required instead. In plain English, this means that the suc-

cessful will have to pay a tax on their success to those who have failed. The rate of the "EMU tax", those liable to pay, and those benefiting will be decided on by unelected officials rather than our elected representatives.

MICHAEL LAGER
Chairman, Braintrust
Constituency Conservative Association
Widham, Essex

Anglo-Saxon upset

Sir: How on earth can someone with the name Hamish McRae refer with a straight face to "we Anglo-Saxons" ("The dawn-ing of the age of the Anglo-Saxon", 7 January)?

The term "Anglo-Saxon" as an economic category is deeply irritating, inaccurate and highly un-PC. Given that the US is the main country thus denoted, I'm surprised that our American cousins, sensitive and literal-minded as they are in these matters, haven't fired volleys of

criticism at this racist and WASP-privileging epithet.

If it is true that the US and the UK – we may also cite New Zealand and the Celtic tiger, Ireland – share a common and distinctive economic model, why not call it "Anglophone"? Not only is this more neutral; it also draws attention, as does Hamish McRae, to the role that happening to speak English has played in these countries' current good fortune.

AIDAN FOSTER-CARTER
Shipley,
West Yorkshire

Classic gas-guzzlers

Sir: David Roots (letter, 7 January) calls for classic car owners to be compensated for the withdrawal of leaded fuel. I was under the impression that they were already receiving compensation: they don't pay road tax on these fuel-hungry, noisy, outdated cars.

MARK ORMISTON
Isleworth, Middlesex

Under the Dome

Sir: The Great Exhibition and the Festival of Britain are cited as models for the Dome exhibition. But both earlier exhibitions contained magnificent objects which needed to be seen to be truly appreciated.

In contrast, advocates for the Dome imply that the displays will be primarily intellectual or even spiritual (mind-boggling) in content. Andrew Marr ("True confessions of a social outcast", 7 January) suggests several topics, among them: "Is the car culture going to carry on growing or shrivel away?", "What future is there for the countryside?", "Is there a limit to human longevity?" Each would make a fascinating newspaper article, book or television programme, but how do you create an attractive exhibition from such abstract themes? And what could be included that has to be seen *in situ*, over several acres, standing up, after a tedious journey with (in my case) small children in tow, rather than mullied over on video or in print in a comfortable armchair at home?

By all means let us mark the millennium with some stimulating debate, but do it in *The Independent* or take over the BBC for a day or a week and give the money to the numerous splendid, cash-starved museums and galleries around Britain which still have magnificence on display.

RACHEL WARD
London W2

Sir: I wish I could share Andrew Marr's optimism that the Dome will be more Sartre than surfball. However, I cannot believe that a tired collection of establishment figures, obsessed with secrecy and their own importance, will produce anything more than Noel's House Party on a grand scale. This, rather than Mr Marr's set of questions, seems the limit of their ambitions.

MALCOLM ACE
Colden Common, Hampshire

Sir: Surely the more imminent Millennium Bug is what to call the next two decades. Last time, they got round the problem by having a king who hardly lasted through the first one and ensuring the second was dominated by the bloodiest war yet seen. What alternative is there this time to the "Noughties" and "Tennies"? CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
London N19

It's a mystery – the strange death of the Irish peace process in three gripping chapters



MILES KINGSTON

Today I am bringing you a complete murder mystery story in which YOU the detective will be presented with ALL the evidence necessary to solve the CRIME and then, after you have failed dismally to do it, I will give you the SOLUTION and you will bang your head on the steering wheel, saying "Lordy, Lordy, I should have seen that coming!"

OK?
Get the idea?
Right, here we go then with the story of: "The Strange Death of The Northern Ireland Peace Process".

CHAPTER ONE
"I'm afraid it's dead, sir. There's nothing we can do."
The speaker was someone

very high up in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He was speaking to someone even higher up. He was talking about the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

"The Peace Process? Dead? But I saw it only the other day! It seemed quite healthy!" said the Very Important Officer.

"Healthy? In what sort of way, sir?"
The very important officer considered for a moment.

"Well," said the VIO (Very Important Officer – DO keep up), "it seemed all poised for action. It wasn't actually moving or anything, but then it never has actually moved or anything, has it?"

"No, sir," said the Quite Important Officer. "That was always its charm in a way. How-

ever much you insulted it, or praised it, it however much you said you depended on it, it never lost its temper or reacted nastily."

"Or reacted at all, really," said the VIO. "Always behaved with true British sang-froid. Strange to have a French word for such a British thing, eh?"

"What French word, sir?"
"Sang-froid."

"Right, sir," said the QIO, hummoring him yet again. "So that's it. The peace process has been found dead."

"Completely dead?"
"Yes, sir."
"Murdered?"
"Yes, sir."
"Suspects?"
"Yes, sir. The IRA. Sinn Féin, the Unionists. Mo-

CHAPTER TWO
Here are the statements of all the main suspects.

Sinn Féin: "Nothing to do with us. We were looking forward to the Peace Process. It sounded fun. The IRA felt the same. Not that we know what the IRA think. But that's what we're guessing."
IRA: "I'm sorry to hear the Peace Process is dead. Nothing

to do with us. We have an alibi. We were out buying some new balaclava helmets. Look, here's the receipt. No, sorry, that one's for the Semtex. This one."

Unionists: "This is yet another example of the way the government, of whatever complexion, have consistently flouted the wishes of the majority of the population of Northern Ireland. We blame the government. And Sinn Féin/IRA. And Dublin. And the Pope. Anyone but ourselves."

Mo Mowlam: "It's a tragedy. It's another tragedy in the history of Ulster. Another bleeding tragedy in the bleeding history of this bleeding country, oh God, are you listening, Tony? Tony! Look, I'll take Health, Education, anything. I'll do any-

thing but Northern Ireland, even *Question Time*, just get me out of here! Otherwise I'll go round the bend and start visiting prisoners in The Maze!"

Angus Deayton: "And at the end of another motorway-monotonous round, we have Sinn Féin steaming along in the slow lane with a thoroughly legal 45mph, and the Unionists in the fast lane with an incredibly similar 45mph, and what's that ahead in the middle lane – it's the corpse of the Peace Process! So, no change there, then."

CHAPTER THREE
The Solution
Did you solve the mystery? Did you notice that everyone

had an alibi, except Ian Paisley, who is barking mad and doesn't count? And Mo Mowlam? Who has no motive?

Therefore the only possible solution is that no murder took place.

That's right! The Northern Ireland Peace Process was dead all along, and has been for years! It's just that nobody dares to point it out.

Except Angus Deayton. Did you notice the way he said that the peace process was dead ...? No change there, then ...???

I think he knows more than he lets on.

I think we'll have him in for another session.

Should be fun. And get his autograph for the wife ...

Welfare reform – we haven't seen anything yet



**DONALD
MACINTYRE
ON HARMAN'S
CRUSADE**

It isn't her fault, but Nicola Horlick has become something of a codeword in Whitehall for the idiocies of the welfare state. A woman earning £60 per week at the check-out at Tesco is below the lower earnings limit for national insurance. As a result she receives no state-funded maternity benefit. By contrast a high-flying woman City executive is entitled to receive 90 per cent of her full pay – reimbursed by the taxpayer – for 14 full weeks every time she has a child. In the case of an executive earning £1m, that means £18,000 per week. And that's despite the fact that she – like every other higher earner – stops paying national insurance above £25,000 per year.

The injustice of this – which DSS officials are currently working on ending in a shake-up of the £500m maternity pay budget – is worth mentioning because it's a reminder of the many aspects of welfare reform that have nothing at all to do with grinding the faces of the poor. It also underlines that for a Government whose first hard choice on welfare reform hewed up in its parliamentary face, it shows every sign of being restless to find others to make.

Let's take a few examples: the leaked David Blunkett letter betrayed deep unease about some of the DSS's proposals on disability benefit and these arguments have not yet been resolved. But I detect no sign that Ms Harman has been pushed off her determination, while ensuring that the genuinely disabled are protected, to seeing to it that less of the £23m disability budget is spent on those who do not need or deserve it. There is a strong case for loading much more of the bill for industrial injuries compensation on compulsory no-fault insurance for employers, but in any case Harman is determined to spend more on preventing accidents in the workplace and less on paying for the consequences of them. There are already longer range, second-term thoughts on the huge difficulty of whether to means-test the old age pension: should, for example, the old age pension be inversely related to earnings so that the higher earners get less from the state when they retire? All these and many more sacred cows look distinctly threatened. The surprising thing about Ms Harman is how fast she bounces back. She is busily telling colleagues that there isn't a single aspect of the welfare state she regards as working properly.

I do not mean to suggest that there are no problems. One is that there are still serious disagreements between Frank Field and Harriet Harman over the draft he has

produced for the Green Paper on welfare reform – which ought now to be close to publication, but isn't yet. One version is that this is less about principle – after all Field and Harman are both arch-modernisers – than about the intensely cerebral nature of the current draft. But it matters, because ministers badly need a text that can form the basis of the campaign to persuade the party and the country that welfare reform is about a lot more than being more right wing about social security than Peter Lilley. Both the row over lone parents' benefit and the leaks over planned cuts in disability benefit descended on the Government without it having set out in a clear and accessible way what it is trying to do. And that is a task that cannot be left to Harriet Harman and Blair himself.

Blair has told his most senior ministers that the Government will be judged on the success of welfare reform; he himself stressed its central importance in a speech at Sedgefield before Christmas. Blair has been reading intensely on welfare over the festive period. But to sell it, not least to the party, the John Prescotts, the David Blunketts and the Frank Dobsons, as well as the Gordon Browns, need to be making at least as many speeches in favour of radical welfare reform as Blair himself. And to do that, there has to be Cabinet agreement on its firm outlines. There also has to be recognition among some of the toughest-minded on welfare reform that some of the fears – for example over disability benefit – are shared by those who are not against reform of any kind. Which is one reason why the Cabinet Committee which Blair will chair, and which he also announced before Christmas, is so important. There are some policies that Harman and her close ally Brown could not, however hard they tried, persuade Prescott and Dobson on their own. Only Blair has the capacity to do that, and although the composition of the committee has not yet been finalised, both men should be on it.

Having eschewed the seductive path of having an easy life in the party, Ms Harman is extraordinarily unbowed by the criticism she took over the cuts in lone parents' benefit. She appears as convinced as ever that the current social security system is in dire need of reform and that it can, in time, be made as popular as the NHS. And this is an important point. The most modernising ministers, Harman included, are convinced that while there will be endless aggravation within the party over the famously hard choices that the Government will have to make in the coming months, the electorate is more than ready for it.

Many people think the wheelchair-bound and the severely disabled get less than they deserve. They worry intensely that many severely handicapped children are virtually abandoned by the state when they reach working age. Many of those same people are equally annoyed when they notice that the man who is drawing a handsome whack of benefit because of his bad back seems to have no trouble digging his garden. Much of the party will shiver; but Harman remains convinced that among as many in Labour's natural constituency of core supporters as among the traditional *Daily Mail* readers of Middle England, the demand for a cleaner, fairer welfare state is irresistible.

Mo Mowlam's disarming ways may be just what is needed today



**SUZANNE
MOORE
WOMAN IN
THE MAZE**

"Astonishing". "Unprecedented". "Audacious". These were among the words that greeted the news that Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is going to walk into the "lion's den" of the Maze Prison in order to talk to loyalist inmates to try to persuade them to stay in the peace talks. All these words could be used of Mowlam's political style itself. No other Secretary of State has gone to the H-blocks for discussions with convicted terrorists but then no other Secretary of State has been Mo Mowlam.

Clearly many observers were shocked and dismayed by her decision. When it comes to Ireland, it is almost as if we are so familiar with inertia and failure that anything new is a threat in itself. While the old methods used to bring about peace have not worked, there is still a tangible fear of the new. Mowlam's "gamble" comes out of her determination to keep the peace train in motion. Indeed her language these days indicates that her goal has shifted from finding a peace settlement to simply being that of keeping everyone talking. We do not need to be reminded of what the alternative to not talking is.

Should the talks fall apart this would be perceived not only as a political failure for Mowlam but a personal one too for a woman who values communication above all else. Her whole image is that of a matey, earthy woman who talks easily and affectionately to everyone.

This is not just an image, as anyone who has met her will tell you. Chewing gum, Mowlam will kick off her shoes and complain that her hair is too tight. As a politician she has kissed not just babies but granite-faced old unionists. She puts her arm around anyone who gets near, patting and prodding her way into meetings. She tells bad jokes and reveals more than she should about confidential matters. Her informality is part of her charm. Though she may appear as someone who doesn't care what people think of her, anyone who



Mo Mowlam, yesterday, in reflective mood

Photograph: Fiona Hanson/PA

makes this much effort with others obviously cares enormously what other people think. All this "take me as you find me" lark must also be calculated. It marks her out from other politicians and has worked up until now largely to her advantage.

Not everyone succumbs to Mo's charm. The condemnation of her by many in Northern Ireland can be seen, as David McKitterick has pointed out on this page, as good old-fashioned chauvinism. Politics in the North is still frighteningly male-dominated. Republicans and unionists alike may have actually found it easier to deal with the quasi-colonial attitudes of former Northern Ireland Secretaries than the unknown quantity that Mowlam represents.

What she has done, which no previous occupant of her post has managed to do before, is to bring the troubles home. People in Britain are more interested in the peace process because of the way she has personalised it. Up until now, the politics of Northern Ireland, though declared important, have actually been a minority interest. A mixture of ignorance and frustration has governed

the British attitude to the whole mess. While many male politicians have talked loftily about securing a place in history should they bring peace to Northern Ireland, Mowlam just wants to talk, replacing ideology with what feels like common sense. What was once dismissed as Mowlam's effortlessly chatty and over-familiar style reveals itself to be an entirely new way of thinking about the Northern Ireland situation, one which is inclusive and human. This is not just the result of her pragmatism but also of her intellect.

If it pays off then, it will have been a stroke of genius by Blair to put his most touchy-feely player in charge of the hardest game in town. Yet if Mowlam represents the new politics, a new way of doing things, then we might ask where the up-and-coming Mo Mowlams are among the surprisingly docile intake of female MPs. Maybe it is too early for many of them to manifest anything like an individual style as they are subject not only to party discipline but also the reality of life in the House. As one poor woman MP replied in the recent Fawcett

threat of her political nous.

Mowlam's strategy has been different. She acts like one of the boys but, because she is not one of the boys, she both gets away with things that none of them would and insulated for things they wouldn't. Her sheer bravery over her illness, her matter of factness about her appearance, the famous slapping of the wig on the table reveal a woman who knows that there is more to life than feminine vanity. She is thus curiously vulnerable and unbelievably hard at the same time.

In some peculiar way, her illness (and the weight gain that has accompanied it) has made it possible for her not only to cuddle up to all sorts of strangers but for them to cuddle up to her too, as she appears devoid of threat.

There are those who wonder whether despite her constant good humour she is being asked to deliver more than she is capable of. The drudgery of this job, the endless flights, the incredibly slow progress must take their toll. If her charm doesn't work, what other resources does she have? We have seen how tough she is physically but there is still uncertainty about her political toughness. But then isn't this always the question that is ultimately asked about women in powerful jobs. Can they back it?

However, when people talk of the feminisation of society, of the effect of having more women in public life and in the workplace, they are usually referring to the qualities that we so value in Mo Mowlam coming to the fore and being properly recognised. A less hierarchical, more informal, more personalised style will dominate. Indeed the new management books are full of this feminised language, of webs and horizontal, rather than vertical, structures; full of workers co-operating instead of competing with each other, all to the benefit of the company.

If this is the case, where then are the other Mo Mowlams? Why does she appear so exceptional? Why is it so difficult for women in power to retain a personality that has not been prepared earlier by the Millbank geeks, one that is full of complexity?

In the present situation, however, we must be thankful for Mo's uniqueness. It is what makes her so disarming. Let us hope that the murderers of the Maze are equally disarmed by her.

Out in the cold – boys at school, men at home



**JACK
O'SULLIVAN
ON THE REAL
DIFFERENCES**

It has been a good week for boys. At last the Government is tackling their educational under-achievement. At last ministers accept that boys may have different needs to girls, needs that their schooling should acknowledge. So, all week we have been discussing whether more male primary teachers are required, whether the curriculum is too "female" for boys, providing insufficient emphasis on their interests. Meanwhile, some educationalists have argued that boys' brains develop at a different rate to girls', making it a mistake for some to tackle reading and writing as early as girls.

The validity and importance of such comments, in explaining boys' underperformance, is questionable. Research evidence is incomplete and often anecdotal. So, given the emotionally charged nature of the subject, there is a danger of over-hasty, wrong-headed recommendations that will do little to help boys.

Nevertheless, this week's policy shift is monumental. For it has, at a stroke, freed us from an intellectual straitjacket. Suddenly, it is OK to admit that, in education and public policy terms, boys are not neutered. It is no longer a heresy to say they may be fundamentally different from girls, requiring different treatment.

This difference may seem

perfectly obvious in most people. But sexual politics likes to avoid it, concentrating instead on equality of treatment. The fear has been that too much talk about difference between the sexes will be used to excuse discrimination against women.

The Nineties are, thankfully, seeing the boundaries of the gender debate loosened, not only for the benefit of boys. In the US, a string of recent books have examined deep-rooted differences between the way men and women think. John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* exemplifies an approach designed to improve relationships between the sexes by acknowledging what they don't have in common.

Likewise, the American psychologist, John Gottman, has identified biological reasons why men and women act in such contrary ways. In his recent book, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, he argues that men, for example, stonewall in argument to protect themselves from heart disease; because, once emotionally excited, it is hard for them to calm down. This weakness is a hangover from their neanderthal days as protectors, when it was important for them to remain on high alert for long periods. In contrast, women will argue relentlessly with men – not knowing when to stop – when something has gone wrong in their relationship.

The evolutionary reason? Because well-developed, thoroughly explored relationships were vital for vulnerable mothers nursing babies.

So why are we allowing ourselves at this particular time to think about differences between the sexes? Perhaps this reflects the fact that the argument for treating men and women equally has triumphed intellectually, if not yet on the ground. So we can afford to acknowledge different needs. It is also hardly surprising that the shift should have come with respect to boys – concern about them is something upon which both women and men, being mothers and fathers, can easily share. Whatever the reason, the liberalisation of debate should benefit both men and women by facilitating their mutual understanding and allowing their different needs to be addressed.

There are two further reasons why this week's initiative represents a liberation for the gender debate. The first concerns recognition among experts that boys are doing no worse than in the past – their longstanding failure is merely being highlighted by female advancement. (Decades ago the 11-plus figures had to be fiddled because girls were doing so well and would have outnumbered boys in grammar schools.) This is a fascinating admission. Once you realise

that the education system served boys badly even in the days of "male domination" you can question whether all sorts of institutions, designed when men controlled everything, actually did men much good.

Second, the implication of the Government's announcement was that "feminisation" of the educational culture may have ill-served boys. And the package of measures, such as introducing more male teachers, amounts to the admission that primary education, at the very least, needs some "masculinisation".

We have come to assume that "feminisation" is always a good thing. And certainly both men and women will speak of its virtues in the workplace – better communication and more flexible hours. Meanwhile, that ugly term "masculinisation" is usually regarded as negative, synonymous with male authoritarianism.

However, the inadequacies of boys' education suggests publicly, perhaps for the first time, that some forms of feminisation can alienate and damage some males. They may need schools to be designed more in their image.

If this is true in schools, then where else might the argument for less feminisation, more masculinisation, apply? If you were to look for one institution, other than school, to which we

would like males to feel a greater attachment, it is the home.

Home is a place where many men clearly do not feel much at home. They often seem to be more at ease in the pub, the garden shed or the allotment. Typically, they do not entertain their friends at home in the way that women do so easily. Walk into most houses and it is easy to see why – the decorating is almost always conceived by women and the vital rooms, kitchen, bathroom and living room, are normally female domains. Yet we live in an age when the needs of good parenting and sustained marital relationships demand that men should feel comfortable with being at home and not take flight as so many do.

The implications of making traditionally "female" institutions more inviting to males, will understandably worry many women. Likewise, they may be concerned about what the new focus on boys at school will mean for their daughters. But such issues, freed up by this week's announcement, will have to be tackled if we are to move to a world in which the war between the sexes is, finally, to come to an end. Negotiating an acceptable new dispensation will require all the mutual understanding that the likes of John Gray and John Gottman are busy imparting to men and women.

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VENUE 3 - Sunday 11th January 1998 at 3pm
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JAN 10 1998

Festive sales surge lifts gloom from the high street

Fears that higher interest rates would lead to a poor Christmas for retailers have been allayed by a crop of upbeat trading statements from stores groups. Most show that while December started slowly, shops were rescued by a late surge in consumer spending in the final days before Christmas. Nigel Cope and Andrew Yates report on yet another year when shoppers left it late.

The high street was given a boost by buoyant trading statements yesterday by a wide range of retailers including Signet, the H Samuel and Ernest Jones jewellery retailers, JJB Sports, and Majestic Wine Warehouses, the off-licence group. Following better than expected figures from John Lewis and Burton, analysts said the worries over Christmas "bloodbath" had proved unfounded.

Richard Hyman of Verdict Research said: "Christmas did arrive late but this trend is well established. Lots of people took the last week before Christmas off work and did their shopping then. It won't be a bonanza Christmas but it will be solid."

However, he warned that 1997 would be seen as the high water mark for high street fortunes in the 1990s as higher interest rates took their toll. "The slowdown has begun and we think that it will continue throughout 1998," he said. Some retailers would have experienced a difficult Christmas with fashion groups said to have had the toughest time.

There was little caution in the air yesterday, however, as Signet led the way with an optimistic message that it would now exceed its profit expectations for the year.

The former Rainers jewellery group reported that in the nine weeks to January 3 like-for-like sales increased by 8.3 per cent in the same period last year. It said it now expected to "comfortably exceed" market expectations for its full year profits. Analysts have now upgraded their forecasts from around £60m to £65m and the shares rose 3.5p to 33.25p. The smaller, more upmar-

ket Ernest Jones chain led the way while sales at the more mass-market H Samuel chain rose by only 1.7 per cent in the period. Signet chairman Jim McAdam said sales of diamonds, silver, gift products and wristwatches had been strong.

"The build-up to Christmas was generally slower than predicted but there was a late surge. We held our nerve and didn't start discounting so we were able to maintain our margins."

JJB Sports, the fast-growing sports retailer, continued its good run with sales in the 6 weeks to 28 December ahead by 10 per cent. This excludes new openings. David Greenwood, financial director, said Adidas had proved the best performing brand of the year, edging ahead of Nike. He said JJB's sales had started strongly in early December but, in contrast to most other retailers, tailed off slightly in the last two weeks. Sales picked up again after Christmas.

Wine sales have also been buoyant over Christmas. According to Majestic Wines, the wine warehouse operator, the feel good factor has made champagne and red wines very popular over the festive period. Tim How, chief executive of Majestic, said: "Our red claret have been our best sellers. I believe wines are continuing to sell well across the industry. The strong economy... and the trend for men to switch from beer to wine explain the growth."

Majestic Wines said sales were up by one-fifth in the last eight weeks of the year, with like for like turnover up 10.9 per cent. The strong trading performance helped Majestic shares rise 20p to 421.5p yesterday.

However, the group denied reports that it had been subject to a £65m takeover offer. "It is a lot of rubbish. We have not had any offers or approaches. The idea of a bid for just £65m is insulting," Mr How said.

Two other retailers also reported upbeat sales messages yesterday. Merchant Retail Group, which operates perfume shops and department stores said it sales were ahead by 14 per cent on a like for like basis in the 13 weeks to 27 December. TJ Hughes, the discount department store operator said its sales were up by 18 per cent in the five weeks to 3 January.



The high street was given a boost by buoyant trading statements yesterday by a wide range of retailers as Christmas 'bloodbath' fears proved unfounded

Relief as Bank of England holds off interest rate rise

News yesterday of a general recovery on the high street coincided with the Bank of England's decision not to raise interest rates. The Bank's announcement sent the pound lower and brought relief all round - for the time being. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, reports.

Retail spending in December was higher than many had feared, according to the Confederation of British Industry. Its latest survey reported a recovery in the growth of sales volumes, both before and after Christmas, following a slowdown in November. Alastair Eperon, chairman of the survey panel for the CBI, said: "We will be monitoring January's figures closely to see

whether the slight upward momentum in consumers' spending is sustainable."

The employers' organisation also welcomed the Bank of England's decision to leave interest rates unchanged at 7.25 per cent. Kate Barker, chief economist, said: "Further interest rate rises risk having too great an impact when the economy is already expected to be sluggish."

The pound shed more than three pence yesterday, falling to just over DM2.93. The benchmark long gilt yield dropped to a record low below 6 per cent. Both moves were driven by hopes that the Bank's decision could mark an end to the series of rises in the cost of borrowing, as well as by the US financial markets.

The US Treasury bond market got a boost from figures showing a small fall in prices charged at the factory gate in November. Producer prices declined by 0.2 per cent to a level 0.6 lower than a year earlier,

mainly due to lower car and truck prices.

But City analysts remained divided about whether a sixth increase in UK interest rates since May 1 is either necessary or likely, especially after yesterday's survey and another earlier in the week showing the service industries still very buoyant. Some think that the economy is not slowing fast enough to keep the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee happy.

"This is just a stay of execution," said Leo Doyle of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, predicting a rate rise next month.

However, Michael Saunders at Salomon Brothers said: "The export sector has already weakened, and consumer spending will follow." He disagreed with the majority view that rates would climb another quarter point in February.

The CBI survey showed that the balance of retailers reporting higher rather than lower sales climbed to 35 per cent in

December, up from a weak 23 per cent in November. The respondents expected a further gain in January, although their expectations have often been disappointed in recent months.

Food, confectionery, clothing, DIY stores and booksellers all enjoyed a strong December. All except shoe shops did better than they had in November. Motor traders also reported a big jump in sales in December, defying their earlier fears of a downturn.

Official figures for December sales on the high street will be published later this month. Meanwhile, the Office for National Statistics issued figures yesterday painting the most comprehensive portrait of sales in the distributive and service industries during the third quarter of 1997. These showed car sales in the UK reaching a record £22.5bn. The total soared 20 per cent compared to the second quarter and was 10 per cent higher than a year earlier.

Drinks industry fears move to ban sport sponsorship

The £40m that drinks companies pour into British sports sponsorship every year is under threat from a controversial French plan to ban drinks advertising for international sporting events. However, as Andrew Yates reports, new European legislation could bring cheer to the British drinks industry.

A move by the French Government to enforce a ban on sports sponsorship from alcoholic drinks companies could put pressure on them to withdraw advertising from big sporting events.

There are growing fears that the European Commission (EC) has decided to ignore a complaint from the drinks industry over France's decision to ban domestic drinks advertising, a controversial policy known as Loi Evin. The EC has again delayed a final decision on whether to uphold the complaint after furious lobbying from French Eurocrats. "There is a feeling they want to sweep this under the carpet," said one source in Brussels.

The decision could have potentially devastating consequences for the UK sports industry. Drinks companies are involved in sponsoring every major sports including Carling Black Label's support for football's premier league and the new deal Tetley Bitter has recently signed to back the English cricket team. Major sporting events such as the Stella Artois tennis tournament and the Martell Grand National could also be affected. The sponsorship market in the UK is worth an estimated £350m a year. Drinks companies account for about 12 per cent of this, or more than £40m a year. US drinks company Budweiser has also run into

trouble coping with the strict ban on drinks advertising and the move has raised a question mark over sponsorship of this year's World Cup in France. If the EC chooses to ignore the issue and effectively back France's position, it could cause huge problems for the coverage of some of the UK's largest sporting events. French TV producers are putting enormous pressure on organisers to remove any form of drinks advertising from sporting arenas and are threatening to withdraw coverage from events if their demands are not met. The situation has got so bad that two big recent sporting events were banned completely. French viewers were faced with a blank screen when they tried to tune into a European football tie between Arsenal and Auxerre and an Irish rugby game from Dublin.

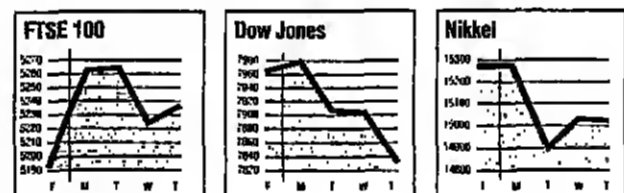
The sports industry is becoming increasingly worried that drinks companies could withdraw from sponsorship if French TV stations persist in banning events.

The move has caused an outcry from the British drinks companies. The European Sponsorship Consultants' Association (ESCA), an industry-wide body set up to lobby against the French policy, is outraged by the continuing wrangles in Brussels.

"We want this to be stopped and are trying to alert people to the danger. There is a fear that this could spread to other countries in Europe and make life very difficult for sponsors," said Helel Day, a sponsorship expert with the ESCA.

However, a green paper, which experts believe will be adopted by the EC later this year, is likely to bring hope to the drinks companies. It promotes the principle of free trade between countries and should give the drinks companies a powerful weapon in their battle with the French Government. They hope the paper will give them right to show drinks sponsored sports events throughout Europe.

STOCK MARKETS



*Dow Jones Index and graph as seen

Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5237.10	13.00	0.25	5367.30	4036.90	3.23
FTSE 250	4880.00	10.00	0.22	4963.80	4384.20	3.19
FTSE 350	2518.30	6.20	0.25	2570.50	2013.40	3.22
FTSE All Share	2457.54	6.06	0.25	2507.65	1996.97	3.21
FTSE SmallCap	2345.20	6.80	0.29	2407.40	2182.10	2.96
FTSE Fledgling	1273.90	2.10	0.17	1346.50	1225.20	3.26
FTSE AIM	991.10	-0.20	-0.03	1138.00	965.90	1.08
Dow Jones	7823.30	-75.24	-0.95	8295.03	6356.78	1.75
Nikkei	15019.18	-8.99	-0.06	20510.79	14488.21	1.02
Hang Seng	9254.53	-284.08	-2.98	16820.31	8775.88	4.58
Dax	4347.23	-44.31	-1.01	4458.89	2886.22	1.86

INTEREST RATES

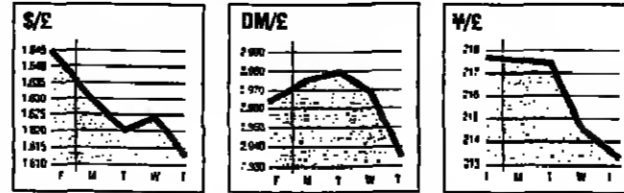


Money Market Rates				Bond Yields			
Index	3 month	1 yr	5 yr	Index	1 yr	5 yr	10 yr
UK	7.56	1.01	7.56	0.52	6.05	-1.58	6.01
US	5.69	0.13	5.75	-0.14	5.48	-1.02	5.74
Japan	0.77	0.27	0.74	0.16	1.88	-0.83	2.50
Germany	3.81	0.48	3.92	0.67	5.13	-0.80	5.69

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
Signet Grp	Standard Chartered
Glynwed Ind	Premier Oil
Seazer Grp	Handy OMA Gas
Somerfield	Eng China Clays

CURRENCIES



Pound				Dollar			
Index	at 10pm	Change	1 yr Ago	Index	at 10pm	Change	1 yr Ago
Dollar	1.8115	-1.55c	1.6880	DM/£	0.8205	+0.59p	0.5924
D-Mark	2.9322	-3.04p	2.8812	¥/£	1.8197	-0.27p	1.5754
Yen	213.46	+0.63	195.55	Yen	132.46	+0.76	115.85
£ Index	103.60	-0.90	98.10	£ Index	110.40	0.00	98.90

OTHER INDICATORS

at 10pm	Change	1 yr Ago	Index	at 10pm	Change	1 yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	15.17	0.11	24.86	GDP	113.90	3.70
Gold (\$)	278.75	-3.50	355.80	RPI	159.80	3.70
Silver (\$)	6.06	-0.03	4.86	Base Rates	7.25	6.00

Electricity competition problems still unsolved

The Government is examining ways to iron out one of the main problems standing in the way of domestic electricity competition, the issue of who takes responsibility for customers when their supplier goes bust. As Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports, the opening of the market is now almost certain to be delayed beyond April.

With less than three months left before the planned introduction of electricity competition, the industry is at loggerheads over who should intervene if a power supplier gets into financial difficulties. The current arrangements for competition allow the industry regulator to take away the operating licence of a supplier, but leaves the onus on customers to sign alternative contracts with new suppliers.

Power companies want new rules in place before competition starts to give the regulator the power to pass existing customer contracts over to a new designated supplier. The Electricity Pool, the wholesale power trading body, has proposed a temporary solution through its existing relationships with regional electricity companies. But in a letter to the industry last month Offer, the electricity watchdog, claimed existing licence provisions were sufficient to deal with the issue.

It emerged last night that the Department of Trade and Industry is in discussions with Offer about the problem and is examining the longer-term possibility of legislation to cover supplier default, along the lines of rules put in place in the gas industry. However any changes recommended by the probe, which forms part of the wider review of utility regulation, would come well beyond the April start date for competition.

Offer will publish a consultation paper on the issue as early as next week in an attempt to dampen the criticism. But Andrew Claxton, the Pool's chief executive, warned that his own proposal was "the only solution currently on the table."

He said: "People in this industry are saying we don't think this is an acceptable risk to live with. Unless we get some support from Offer this will be difficult to implement."

The DTI last night backed Offer's approach. "We don't believe this is an issue stopping competition, because the regulator has responsibility to ensure suppliers are able to finance their operations," said a spokesman.

However Mr Claxton insisted legislation remained the best way out of the dilemma and said the DTI appeared to be reconsidering the issue. "This has been around for a couple of years and the DTI have previously steadfastly refused to do anything about it. It's very frustrating."

It also emerged yesterday that John Bartle, the Industry Minister, is to meet with electricity chief executives in two week's time and is likely to announce a delay of at least three months to competition.

The meeting, due around 22 January, is the third industry "summit" called by Mr Bartle, who has put himself in personal charge of competition. Next week PA Consulting, the group monitoring the process for Offer, will deliver a report which is expected to warn that complex computer systems planned by suppliers will not be ready for April.

The plan was for four companies, Eastern, Seaboard, Manweb and Yorkshire, to begin competition in their regions on time, with other suppliers joining in a phased introduction by September. But Professor Stephen Littlechild, the regulator, admitted last month that competition was "very unlikely" to start on time.

New National Savings customers lose out

New customers of National Savings yesterday became the latest victims of the fall in long-term interest rates as the interest offered on five-year savings was cut by up to 7 per cent.

New pensioner bonds, which had paid 7 per cent a year, will now pay 6.5 per cent. Children's bonus bonds bought now will pay 6.25 per cent, down from 6.75 per cent. Existing savings are unaffected. The cuts create a highly unusual situation in that savers can now get better interest when they put money away for a shorter period. Whereas pensioner bonds with a 5-year lock-in pay 6.5 per cent, income bonds, repayable on 90 days' notice, pay 7 per cent.

National Savings yesterday said it was

forced into the cuts by the money markets. Short-term interest rates were up, but longer-term rates had fallen in anticipation of low inflation under a European single currency.

Peter Barea, chief executive of National Savings, said: "Like other major retail providers, we have had to take action to reduce rates on our medium term products. The present reality for savers is that fixed medium term rates are lower than short term rates."

The move mirrors cuts by life insurers in the amount they pay in bonuses to endowments and pensions. Scottish Life yesterday became the fifth office to announce cuts in annual bonuses.

— Andrew Varty



OUTLOOK ON MAKING INTEREST RATE JUDGEMENTS AND THE CONDITIONS FOR AID IN THE FAR EAST

MPC should err on the side of hawkishness

It gave us a breather this month, but will the Monetary Policy Committee put interest rates up in February instead? Unlike all those analysts in the City who sound utterly certain about whether and when and how much further borrowing costs need to rise to keep inflation on course, the MPC displays a becoming modesty about its ability to see into the future.

We live in challenging times. Diverging patterns in different areas of the economy make it unusually hard to be confident about the rate of growth in the next year. On top of that there is a big crisis taking place in the world economy the consequences of which are impossible to predict. In these circumstances even the best forecasts are almost bound to go awry.

And - as some of the country's most prominent economic forecasters spelt out at an Economic and Social Research Council-sponsored conference in London yesterday - predicting future growth and inflation has to be done against frequent revisions to past data, ignorance about the true structure of the economy and pure bolts from the blue in the shape of unforeseen events. Any claim to certainty is bogus.

So, even without having overheard the MPC's meeting this week, it is easy to sketch out the discussion. On the one hand, the strength of the pound has depressed manufacturing and is starting to squeeze recorded export growth. The contribution from trade to growth will decline sharply, especially against the background of the Asian crisis. This will keep global inflationary pressure weak. To purely do-

mestic monetary considerations, the Bank must also add its responsibility to join other central banks in helping stabilise the world's financial markets.

On the other hand, spending in the shops and the two-thirds of consumer spending that occurs beyond the high street are displaying strong momentum. Pay settlements are creeping up, with January an important bargaining month. Employment continues to climb and people still have the pleasure of last year's windfalls swelling their bank accounts. The boom may be over, but spending is not about to nosedive.

Weighty evidence is probably required on one side of the balance or the other to justify action on interest rates - whether up or down - but it will always be a question of judgement in the end. For what it's worth, the Committee should for the time being continue to err on the side of hawkishness. The point of having an independent central bank - especially in a historically inflation-prone country like the UK - is to be better safe than sorry. At this stage the risks of an overly lax monetary policy still outweigh the risks of an overly cautious one.

Moreover, policy makers need to be far more concerned nowadays with the precise makeup of what inflationary pressures there are in the economy in making their interest rate decisions. Deflationary pressures in the world economy, and the strong pound, may be disguising a build up of inflationary pressure elsewhere - in wages for instance.

Severe wage inflation alongside falling prices for goods and services make a particularly dangerous combination with possibly serious consequences for long term growth and employment. This is the bogeyman the monetary policy committee must most fear. Unfortunately it is not at all clear what the Bank's policy response ought to be should such a spectre make an appearance. This is unknown territory, even for central bankers with long experience of control over interest rates. For the newly independent Bank of England, devising the correct response is going to be of vital importance.

IMF must stick to its guns

The International Monetary Fund has six main purposes, according to its last annual report. Purpose five is defined as "to give confidence to members by making the general resources of the Fund temporarily available to them under adequate safeguards, thus providing them with opportunity to correct maladjustments in their balance of payments without resorting to measures destructive of national or international prosperity".

It is this last bit which seems to have become the main bone of contention with the IMF's record breaking package of support for the Tiger economies of the Far East. Just what is a measure destructive of national prosperity? To many in the Far East, the enforced closure of banks and

corporations, with its consequent loss of wealth and employment, looks like just that. And to what extent does the preservation of international prosperity justify putting up huge amounts of money from the developed world to prop up these semi corrupt economic and political systems?

For members of the Indonesian Government, a measure destructive of national prosperity plainly means most of the conditions the IMF attaches to its support. Indonesia's "denial budget" of a few days back is probably the closest thing the IMF has yet experienced, in recent history anyway, to a smash and grab raid on its money. Indonesia has already drawn on some of its IMF support. Now it is refusing to go through with most of the IMF's conditional economic reforms and threatening to default on its foreign debt to boot. Meanwhile, the Indonesian budget has made the various little hits of creative accounting used by the Europeans to squeeze into Maastricht's monetary pact look positively benign by comparison.

President Suharto is calling the IMF's bluff. He has the money but no strings attached, he's saying. The IMF's response to this extraordinary piece of brinkmanship should be an obvious one - to withdraw support until this silly little tin pot dictator comes to his senses. If the IMF sticks to its six defined purposes, that is exactly what it should be doing. The world gives a little room for debate on this, but not much.

Furthermore, if the IMF gives way on

Indonesia, it will have to loosen its conditions for all the others too. Thailand and Malaysia certainly won't be prepared to play ball. The big daddy of the region's stricken economies, South Korea, will also be looking for big concessions. Unfortunately, it is not at all clear that intransigence is actually what the response is going to be. The crisis in the Far East is beginning to move from the economic to the political and in doing so the IMF may be forced to become overtly what it perhaps always has been covertly - a tool of US foreign policy.

We seem fast to be approaching territory where IMF meets CIA. Investment bankers are taking over where the spooks left off, quite literally apparently, for Wall Street bankers are now more common visitors to the Whitehouse's Situation Room than US foreign policy advisers. Maps and satellite spy pictures have been replaced with flip charts, budgetary projections and capital flow diagrams.

As economic crisis degenerates into civil unrest, as it looks increasingly likely to in Indonesia, the IMF's resolve and worthy purposes are going to be tested to their limits. Is it going to stick to its guns and use its money to drive through the economic reforms the region so desperately needs? Or is it going to chicken out and in the interests of short-term national and international prosperity, pay up regardless? This always looked like being an interesting year economically, the political and social implications of what's happening may be more far reaching still.

Indonesia plunges deeper into crisis as 'Alice approach' defies IMF terms

Indonesia was left reeling yesterday as the financial markets plunged sharply for the third day running while fears were growing about President Suharto's political future. Stephen Vines, in Hong Kong, says that analysts in the capital Jakarta can see no end to the crisis while the Government continues to defy the demands from the International Monetary Fund for tough action.

Yesterday the local currency spiralled into free fall, plunging at one point by 25 per cent before ending the day down 18 per cent. This contributed to a fall which has wiped around one-third off the rupiah's value in the space of just three days. The stock market moved almost in tandem, with share prices dropping by 18 per cent at a low in yesterday's trading before recovering at the close with prices down by 11.5 per cent.

The country is awash with rumours about the situation. The army is on alert to crack down on signs of social unrest. Shoppers, fearful of stagnation have besieged stores using up their money before it loses any more of its value. Meanwhile, the government is showing few signs of having any idea of what to do about the economic meltdown. Following hard on the heels of Tuesday's budget, which was widely viewed as lacking in realism, the central bank yesterday dismissed the currency fall as no more than a temporary phenomenon.

This "Alice in Wonderland" approach, which includes an unwillingness to implement the terms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) package agreed less than three months ago, could result in a drying up of the funds from the rescue package. The IMF is meeting in Washington although Korea, rather than Indonesia, is on the agenda.

When the Indonesian markets opened yesterday they were painfully aware of a warning from Lawrence Summers, the US Deputy Treasury Secretary, about the need for Indonesia to show its commitment to reforms agreed with the IMF. The next disbursement of the IMF bail-out, totalling \$3bn, is due to be delivered in mid-March. It is now questionable whether the IMF will be prepared to hand over the money.

This concern yesterday led Fitch IBCA, the credit agency, to downgrade Indonesia's long-term foreign currency, saying the tabling of unrealistic budget proposals "which publicly flout recently agreed targets with the IMF is a severe blow to confidence in Indonesia's willingness to maintain appropriate economic policies".

In addition, Fitch IBCA said the deteriorating economic situation raised political stresses within Indonesia, since the Suharto regime has drawn much of its legitimacy from economic success. Other factors included the fact that export earnings would be hit by recent falls in oil prices, while the banking sector could be affected as the plunging currency put pressure on the country's corporate sector.

The ripple effects of the Indonesian crisis have so far had the greatest impact on neighbouring Singapore, which has close economic ties with Indonesia. Yesterday share prices in Singapore fell by 7 per cent, taking the Straits Times industrial index to its lowest point since 1991.

Elsewhere in the region, fears of Indonesian contagion were high, particularly in Hong Kong, which seems poised to raise interest rates at a bankers' meeting today. Fears of a rate rise sent the Hang Seng Index down by almost 3 per cent in a day of heavy and volatile trading.

As Hong Kong share prices tumbled, the uncertainty over the fate of Peregrine Investment Holdings was prolonged. Hong Kong based Peregrine, one of Asia's fastest growing finance conglomerates, admitted that Zurich Centre Investment's agreement to take a 24 per cent stake in Peregrine was being renegotiated. An announcement on the fate of the deal has been delayed until today. This increased speculation about the extent of Peregrine's problems and its ability to secure outside investors to sustain its business.

Elsewhere in the region the news was hardly brighter. Although in Korea both the stock market and the local currency showed timid signs of recovery on hopes that the nation's massive debts would be rolled over, providing a badly needed breathing space.

Even if the debts were rolled over in Korea and other countries, including Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, which are under IMF-imposed austerity programmes, this would not solve the underlying problems which brought their financial systems to their knees.

An economist from a European bank based in Hong Kong said: "There's no confidence out there. These people don't trust their own currencies and there's no reason for them to do so."

Casting around for ways of stabilising Asian currencies, many local analysts have urged their governments to look at the possibility of establishing currency boards, similar to that which operates in Hong Kong. Currency boards establish a fixed parity, usually with the US dollar and maintain that parity through squeezing liquidity out of the market at times of high activity and manipulating interest rates to support their currencies rather than defending them by buying back their own currencies in foreign exchange markets.

The priority, as seen by the decision makers at the IMF, is to ensure that banks are repaid. Governments have different priorities: in Asia they are caught between a rock and a hard place. Every exit route is marked with a variety of hard choices.

Last night Lee Kyung-Shik, governor of the Bank of Korea, called for a rollover of the country's short-term debt, with repayment delayed. Speaking after meetings with representatives of the Bank of England and Bank of France, he said South Korea has asked for a "delay, not a conversion" of its debt. Some creditors have been seeking conversion of the debt to bonds.

Outlook, this page

How Asia's economic meltdown affects UK projects



Big schemes threatened but holidays are cheaper

Trade officials yesterday warned UK companies that more high-profile transport and infrastructure projects in the Pacific Rim could be in jeopardy as the currency crisis gripping the region continued to deepen.

However, holidaymakers and shoppers can look forward to a bonanza thanks to the devaluation in the Tiger economies. Michael Harrison and Andrew Yates report on the winners and losers from the Asian economic meltdown.

A number of prestige projects have already been postponed in the area. Indonesia has scrapped 80 projects including a new airport on the holiday island of Lombok. Malaysia has deferred the Bakun dam, and the Hopewell Mass Rapid Transport rail system in Bangkok has been put on ice along with a new international airport.

The Department of Trade and Industry is now advising UK contractors and exporters to approach the region with a great deal more caution. A promotional video launched by the previous President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang trumpeting the Tiger economies as the "Land of Opportunity" is being rebranded with a much more sober voice-over.

"We remain confident of the region in the medium term but the crystal ball is certainly looking a lot murkier in the short term," said one senior UK trade official. "There is no sign at the moment of default to any significant extent but we can't be sure of what is in the pipeline as people are only just beginning to realise the seriousness of it. You cannot rule out contracts being reneged on or projects curtailed as the crisis deepens."

Despite retrenching on many of their overseas investments, the South Koreans are pressing ahead with major domestic projects like the £2.8bn Incheon airport and the Seoul-Pusan high speed rail link oo which GEC-Alsthom is a contractor.

British Aerospace, which has a controversial £160m order to supply Indonesia with 16 Hawk trainer aircraft, said

deliveries had not yet started but work was beginning on the order and there were no indications of any problems.

The Association of Consulting Engineers said that the Asia Pacific region was by far the biggest growth area with the total value of contracts rising by 52 per cent to £52bn in 1996. The consulting engineer Ove Arup, one of the biggest firms operating in the area, said there was less work in the pipeline now. "The level of private work, like factories and offices is faltering but infrastructure projects that are publicly funded are going ahead," said Olivia Wheatoo of Ove Arup's business development department.

There are no such worries for holidaymakers, who are jetting off to the region in their droves to take advantage of increased spending power. All the major tour operators are seeing a rise in the number of customers wanting to take an exotic trip to Thailand or bask on the beach in Bali.

"We are very pleased with Far East bookings at the moment. We have seen a big increase in the number of passengers booking for the Far East in the last few

months," said a spokeswoman from First Choice, one of the country's largest tour operators. "Holiday makers are waking up to the fact that they are going to get a deal once they get there."

A spokeswoman from Kuoni said: "The Far East has been better value than ever before." It is not just cheaper prices of local food and drinks which are attracting hundreds of holiday makers. Tour operators have been able to secure cheaper hotels and flights, bringing down the price of many package deals. The currency turmoil could also prompt tour operators like Thomson to buy rivals in the Far East.

Meanwhile shoppers could see prices of microwaves, CD players and white goods manufactured in the region tumble, according to economists and retail experts.

"I think prices are almost bound to fall," said Martin Weale, director of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research. "In South Korea, the value of the currency has almost halved in the last year. How much this will filter through to the shops we don't know but it would be extraordinary if none of it did."

JAN 10 1998

BG hits new peak amid hopes of further cash handouts

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

BG stepped on the gas as stories of further cash handouts and takeover action swirled around the stock market. The shares climbed 13.75p to 305p, a new peak.

Trading was heavy with the order-driven system accounting for around one third of the near 19 million turnover.

The former British Gas astonished many observers when it geared up to return £1.3bn to its investors through the "B" share route last year.

The subsequent disposal programme is running ahead of estimates. It is now expected to realise comfortably more than £1bn, perhaps even £1.5bn, from asset sales by the middle of the year compared with earlier expectations of a few hundred million pounds.

The BG sales bandwagon has alerted the market to the possibility that the group will find itself with so much surplus cash it will feel obliged to return

value to shareholders although there is a sneaking feeling it will adopt the share buy-back course.

The group, now largely an oil and gas explorer and producer, saw analysts from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell who reiterated their buy recommendation. Other analysts are keen on the stock.

Last year BG was one of the best performing blue chips. At one time the shares bumped along at around 150p.

There is persistent speculation that its growing oil and gas interests are making it increasingly attractive to the oil goliaths. The current name in the frame is Shell, little changed at 420.5p.

Centrica, the gas operation split from BG in February, was also in form, gaining 2.75p to 93.75p, reflecting the resolution of the last of its North Sea take and pay deals.

For much of the session the

market was in ebullient form: trading was busy with turnover easily exceeding 1 billion shares. Worries about the Far East, particularly Indonesia, arose as New York put on a shaky performance during London hours. Besides the tiger economies American investors displayed their usual sensitivity over the highly volatile payroll figures, due today.

Unchanged domestic interest rates came as no surprise. The 72.3 points early Footsie gain was largely in anticipation of a standstill. At the close the index was clinging rather uncertainly to a 13 gain at 5,237.1. Supporting shares were firm.

Retailers were more positive as trading reports suggested the festive shopping spree was rather better than earlier indications. Even so there remains a nagging worry that one or two nasties lurk.

Jeweller Signet created a 3.5p sparkle to 33.25p. Majestic Wine, with takeover gossip mingling with trading progress, bubbled 20p higher to 421.5p. Two yet to report, Next and Dixons, attracted buyers. Next gained 20p to 725p; Dixons 10p to 587p.

British Aerospace, planning to cut its 21 per cent stake in the Orange mobile telephone group, rose 24p to 1,790p. A

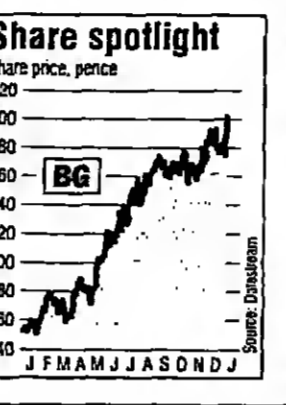
BZW warning that profit downgradings could be on the way lowered British Airways 18p to 585p. Nikko, however, remains bullish, suggesting the shares are worth buying.

Securicor collected another buy circular, this time from ABB Amro Hoare Govett. The shares climbed 11.5p to 325p with Hoare suggesting a 400p target. NatWest Securities and SBC Warburg helped BT 11p higher to 500.5p.

British Petroleum's recovery continued with a 12p gain to 790p. Morgan Stanley reckons the shares should go to 875p.

Somerset had another run. The supermarket chain, which struggled to get its flotation away in 1996, rose 11p to a 230.5p peak. Shortly after is share sale the price fell to 147.5p.

Food retailers have been romping ahead, prompting comments that they are becoming dangerously overvalued. Much of Somersetfield's



TAKING STOCK

Disposal rumours lifted Skelchey. The shares rose 6p to 46p with 7 million of them traded. The group has said it intends to sell its SupaSope and Skelchey dry cleaning chains to concentrate on business services. A spokesman refused to say whether talks are under way.

South Country Homes, a residential property minnow, jumped 13.5p to 48.5p. One story is that Saody Anderson, the former Porterbrook leasing group chief, has built a 27 per cent stake. Whether Richard Grogan still has 28 per cent is unclear.

Stephen Deao, chairman of Dean Corporation, is thought to have lifted his interest in the building services and maintenance group in 36.4 per cent, buying 680,000 shares at 10p; market price is 12p.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve month dividend gross divided by the share price. The share price is the closing price on the FTSE 100 index. The share price is the closing price on the FTSE 100 index. The share price is the closing price on the FTSE 100 index.

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(715 p.m. London EC2A 4PP)

Seaqu volume: 1.06bn trades 65.63

Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes

FTSE 100 index hour by hour

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Lindsay stirs controversy again by finding himself new position of influence

Maurice Lindsay, who had lost his credibility as the chief executive of the Rugby Football League, has fallen on his feet again, apparently landing another top job, as Dove Hodfield reports.

Maurice Lindsay has again proved himself the game's

great survivor by being pushed out of one top job in the sport only to be poised to leap sideways into another.

Lindsay, chief executive of the Rugby Football League for the last five years, was asked for his resignation by the RFL's chairman, Sir Rodney Walker, at a meeting of the code's board of directors this week.

That seemed to mark the demise of a man who has dominated the administration of the

game since he masterminded the rise of Wigan in the 1980s. But, within hours, Lindsay was lined up with a new job as managing director of Super League (Europe) – the elite competition he was instrumental in launching when the game in Britain accepted an £87m television deal with Rupert Murdoch in 1995 – subject to the approval of Super League clubs at a meeting next Friday. Lindsay weathered the con-

troversy over the Super League revolution, but after an unhappy 1997 – which included an investigation into accusations over his expenses which produced no evidence, alleged mismanagement of development funds and a near miss in his bid to become chairman of the Tote – he was told at Wednesday's meeting that he no longer commanded the confidence of clubs nor of his staff at league headquarters.

There could also be legitimate concern over whether he is the best person to negotiate with a newly reinvigorated game in Australia.

"I can confirm that a discussion took place which involved the board," said Sir Rodney, who last year headed a working party on the running of the game, which heard criticism of Lindsay from all quarters. "Subsequently, there was a meeting between Chris Cais-

ley, the chairman of Super League (Europe), and Mr Lindsay, which resulted in him standing down as chief executive of the RFL."

Those who were determined to get rid of Lindsay are angry now that he has apparently found a bolt hole, in the shape of what could yet prove to be an equally influential job. It was in the light of those misgivings that a statement announcing his move to Super League as a *fait*

accomplis was withdrawn soon after being issued yesterday.

That new job now hinges on convincing the clubs that he can work effectively alongside Super League's chief executive, Colin Myler, based in London.

However, it all resolves itself, it is an appropriately messy ending to his five turbulent years at the helm of the game as a whole. He will be replaced, at least in the short term, by his articulate and

well-respected No.2, Neil Tunncliffe, but the League may well look outside the game for a successor.

From within the game, David Howes and Gary Hetherington, chief executives at St Helens and Leeds respectively, could emerge as candidates, while Brian Smith, the former coach and chief executive at Bradford who is now coaching in Australia, would be a strong overseas contender.

Newcastle's bottle is food and drink to seasoned Tait

The conservative wing of the Rugby Football Union may find it difficult to stomach, but Sir John Hall's Newcastle are ahead of the Allied Dunbar Premiership pack and growing stronger by the day. Are the Geordies here to stay? Our Rugby Correspondent gets the lowdown on the high life from a key foot-soldier in rugby's Toon Army.

There is more than a touch of the "nobody likes us and we don't care" about Newcastle as they continue to buck the system and home in on Premiership honours at their first attempt. They boast an owner who has ruffled more establishment feathers than a fox in a chicken coop, a director of rugby whose squeaky clean image has slipped to reveal a competitive streak of pure granite, a captain who reacts to every yellow card with increased vigour, and an uncompromising professional attitude that leaves the "play up and play the game" brigade spluttering into their G and Ts.

In fact, they could be a mirror image of the Wimbledon of Sam Hammam and Vinny Jones, except for one important distinction. They have class. Oodles of it. Class in the tight five, class in the back row, class at half-back, class out wide. They may not be the youngest side in the Premiership, but the preponderance of thirtysomethings has given them a "now or never" edge that is proving extremely difficult to resist.

Two of those elder statesmen, Rob Andrew and Dean Ryan, are combining demanding roles with a dexterity that speaks volumes for their professionalism and powers of self-motivation. As director of rugby and outside-half, Andrew has become every bit as adept at winning the games played in the boardroom as those played outside on the Kingston Park pitch. As coach and captain, Ryan has persuaded a hard core of more experienced internationals to follow him out of the trenches and into the line of fire. In short, the renegade Wasps have matched Sir John Hall's ruthlessness in kind.

"There is," agrees Alan Tait, the Scottish centre who performed so influentially as a Lions Test wing in South Africa last summer, "a hard edge here. Very definitely. And as someone who played a lot of rugby league at a good level, I respond to that. No one at Newcastle is there to mess about. We train, we play, and at the moment at least, we win. I've been extremely impressed with the management and coaching at the club, not least because it has created a culture of success."

At 33, Tait is a seasoned performer, autumn being the season in question. (The same can be said of Gary Armstrong, Nick Poppell, George Graham and Richard Arnold). Yet his influence and enthusiasm are such that Newcastle may well offer to extend his contract beyond the end of the current campaign, leaving Tait to decide between putting his body on the line for another year and upping sticks in pursuit of a coaching position elsewhere.

"To be honest with you, I was

BY CHRIS HEWETT

sceptical about how we would perform in the top flight after winning promotion last year," he said. "Not because I didn't feel we were a good side, but because I wondered whether we had left our preparation too late. Five of us went on the Lions tour, some were abroad with England, others were injured. There was no pre-season to speak of, no chance to build for the Premiership challenge."

"When we left for France in late July for a week in Agen, I was still aching from the Lions trip. But looking back, that camp was crucial. There was a good gym, good weather and a strong emphasis on fitness. There were no moans, no excuses, no time-wasters. When we played Agen, who are some side, at the end of our stay, we won. I knew then that there was a fair bit of bottle in the squad."

That "bottle" element is important to Tait, whose league experience with Widnes and Leeds, not to mention his 16 Great Britain caps, taught him

that success in a professional sport is usually paid for in blood, sweat and tears. "What encourages me about Newcastle is our ability to steal games. We won at Bath in the last minute and we won at Sale when we were looking down both barrels for much of the afternoon. Those sorts of results indicate character."

"Perhaps they indicate that luck is on our side, too. You need luck in a drawn-out competition like the Premiership and the longer you stay at the head of the pile, the more the good fortune seems to stick around. I played through some bad times at Leeds and it often appeared that although we were performing as well as the teams at the top, the bounce of the ball was against us. At Newcastle at the moment, the bounce is with us."

There are also, however, sound tactical reasons why Newcastle go unbeaten into Sunday's home match with London Irish. "I think we've made a virtue of strong defence and the league experience plays a part in that," Tait said. "When Inga (Va'alga Tuigamala, the dual union-league specialist from New Zealand) and I play together in midfield, we move up far quicker than most, very much in the 13-man style. Opponents are forever claiming we play offside, but if they watch the videos with a dispassionate eye they'll find what we do is perfectly legal. Southern hemisphere teams play the same trick and get slapped on the back for it. When we do it, we get it in the neck. That's life, I suppose."

"I would also say that we have a strong, physical pack that has delivered week in, week out, especially in the bad conditions. Ryan is in real form. Pat Lam and Ross Nesdale are good operators and Garath Archer is back to his best. We may not have the quickest pack in the world and it will be interesting to see how they go when the weather improves, but at the moment they are winning us ball."

"It would be daft to take anything for granted because the big games are still to come: Bath and Saracens at home will definitely test us, especially as everyone is after our scalp. But that's nothing new to me: Leeds were the most unpopular league side in England when I was there, so I'm used to that sort of animosity. Hopefully, it will bring the best out of us."



Alan Tait: There is hard edge here. No one at Newcastle is there to mess about

Photograph: Emics

Rejuvenated Evans back in the running for Welsh captancy

Ieuan Evans, Wales' record-breaking captain, could emerge as a surprise contender to reclaim the job for this season's Five Nations' Championship.

Kevin Bowring, the Wales coach, must appoint a new leader following the career-ending spinal injury suffered by the flanker Gwyn Jones last month and he admits there are several candidates.

Evans, 34 in March, was today recalled to the national squad after an 11-month absence caused through Lions commitments and injuries which saw him miss seven Tests.

Bowring praised the Bath wing with 71 caps as "a tallismen and model professional," and says he will give the captancy careful consideration before

Wales' Five Nations warm-up fixture against Italy at Stradey Park, Llanelli on 7 February.

Evans has Wales a record 28 times, and clearly figures in Bowring's thinking alongside Robert Howley, Scott Gibbs, Gareth Llewellyn and Neil Jenkins. "There is a number of candidates," said Bowring, who announced a 53-man squad featuring Evans' Lions colleague Scott Quinnell, another notable absentee during the autumn international programme that featured matches against Romania, Tonga and New Zealand. "But it is not a decision we would make quickly."

Evans has taken time to establish himself at Bath since his summer move from Llanelli, yet Bowring believes he is produc-

ing world-class form once again.

"His enthusiasm to play for Wales remains as strong as ever, and he's back in the squad to help us try and succeed in this season's Five Nations."

Bowring has kept in close touch with the family of his former captain Jones and the University of Wales Hospital, Cardiff, where the popular medical student is slowly recovering. "Gwyn is showing encouraging signs of progress," Bowring said. "He has movement in all four limbs, and can stand unaided for a few seconds. He's as motivated and committed to overcome this injury, but knows it will be a slow, hard slog."

The top four Welsh clubs, Cardiff, Pontypridd, Swansea and Llanelli, provide 37 players,

while 10 come from Richmond, Bath and Harlequins, but unfashionable Ebbw Vale also gain recognition with stand-off Byron Hayward and flanker Kingsley Jones rewarded.

Wales Squad (by 17th February, and for Five Nations' Championship): Backs: A. Bateman (Pontypridd), I. Gough (Newport), A. Gledhill (Pontypridd), J. Humphreys (Cardiff), J. Jenkins (Cardiff), I. Evans (Bath), S. Gibbs (Swansea), M. Gilman (London Welsh), H. H. Jones (Harlequins), B. Hayward (Ebbw Vale), R. Howley (Cardiff), D. James, N. Jenkins, P. Jones (Cardiff), K. Jones (Ebbw Vale), A. Lewis (Cardiff), G. Llewellyn (Swansea), A. Lloyd (Pontypridd), R. Macdonald (Llanelli), A. Moore (Swansea), S. Moore (Swansea), I. Munro (Cardiff), C. Quinnell (Richmond), D. Quinnell (Richmond), C. Stephens (Richmond), W. Thomas (Cardiff), M. Voke (Llanelli), A. Williams (Richmond), N. Williams (Pontypridd), S. Williams (Cardiff), C. Wyatt (Llanelli), G. Young (Cardiff).

— Andrew Baldock

GOLF

Artists, airheads and new arrivals prepare for life on tour

Earning a card to play on the European Tour is a dream come true. The recruits cannot wait for the season to start, but as Andy Farrell, in San Roque, Spain, discovers, not all of them are experiencing the magic for the first time.

Apollo was always an appropriate sponsor for the European Tour's Training School, an event bringing together graduates from the Challenge Tour and the Qualifying School prior to what is meant to be the lift-off of their golfing careers.

Although MacGregor have now taken over the backing for the week at San Roque, where the European and American teams stayed for last September's Ryder Cup, the idea remains the same. Coaches,

psychologists, physiologists and nutritionists are all here to offer their expertise to 21 new recruits from seven countries to the European circuit.

Each player has realised a common goal in earning his tour card. Many are wet behind the ears. "I'm looking forward to putting on good greens," one said. "Don't bank on it," came the cynical reply. None are more grateful, however, than those who have loved and lost their cards in the past.

John Hawksworth appeared in the same Walker Cup team in 1985 as Colin Montgomerie, Peter Baker and David Gifford. In his two head-to-head meetings with Montgomerie, Hawksworth won each time. Last Sunday night, while Monty was picking up \$1m in Arizona, the 36-year-old Midlander was "picking up a cup of tea while watching him on the TV."

"Colin was not the main man," Hawksworth said of their

amateur days. "His attitude has changed drastically."

Hawksworth's has had to change, too. Last November's Qualifying School was his 10th attempt to gain a card and only the second time he has been successful. Having first arrived on tour in 1990, he lost his card three years later. Last season "was a nightmare". He made only £546.98 from 10 Challenge Tour events, and was then reduced to playing the odd regional PGA event and money matches, some for sums in excess of four figures.

"I had a sticky time when I was married," he said. "I wasn't happy. The worst I ever felt was when I failed to pre-qualify for the Open last summer. I didn't know if I could carry on."

Meeting Kamini Aga changed everything. "She is a dressage trainer, one of the top people in her field. She understands how tough it is to compete and how to prepare for

tournaments. She came to the Qualifying School and I could spend the time when I was not playing, with her – rather than hitting hundreds of balls on the range for the rest of the day."

Johan Rystrom's renaissance came from art. A friend of Jesper Parnevik, who helps design the Swedish Ryder Cup player's clothing, Rystrom quit the tour after having three second places in 1992 and '93. "I was tired of golf and all the travelling," he said. The son of an architect, Rystrom tried drawing, unsuccessfully. "I am no good at Fictionary."

Instead, he turned to producing collages. For Parnevik's wedding, Rystrom made one with two champagne glasses and four glass strawberries glued on to a mounting. He was going to add some corals from the champagne bottles at the wedding, but "Jesper is so weird there was only beer and cider."

His favourite features a baseball bat and glove from the

1940s. One day he was offered £50 for one of his efforts and more orders followed. He put the price up to £300, but people were not deterred. Now he has 18 orders outstanding. "When I started, it was a relief to go into a darkened room and do something for yourself. I really helped me."

As for his work with the Lindberg clothing firm, his job is actually to rein in the wilder ideas of the designer. "If you don't hold him back, it would look seriously weird. He wanted Jesper to wear inch-high platform heels."

At the MacGregor Challenge, a one-round event at Valderrama won by the Spaniard Ivo Giner with a 71, Hawksworth won £300 for fourth place and Rystrom shot 78. "I hit the ball well and putted great," the Swede said, "but my aiming was terrible."

David Lynn, whose hobby was once listed as clubbing, but not

of the golfing variety, had played the Ryder Cup venue before with the England amateur team.

"I told my playing partners on the 17th tee that it was an easy hole, and that the pitch to the green was easy," he admitted. Inevitably, he took a nine on the spectacular par five, finding the water with his three-wood second shot, and then seeing his fourth, a wedge shot, spin off the green back into the pond.

The hole, controversially redesigned by Seve Ballesteros and the scene of so much drama in the Ryder Cup, is to be modified again by the owner of Valderrama, Jimmy Pato. Out go the mounds and the rough and in come some trees to narrow the driving area.

Pato will also move the tee forward so it plays as a 475-yard par four. "Everyone who plays Valderrama will remember the 17th hole," Ballesteros, the Ryder Cup captain, once said. Not any more.

EQUESTRIANISM

Philco dies at age of 32

David Broome's former mount Philco was put down on Tuesday at the venerable age of 32 after occupying the same stable in the rider's yard near Chesham for 26 years.

The grey gelding, owned by Lord and Lady Harris, was originally bought from Florida where he had been ridden by Rodney Jenkins. The price was not disclosed, but this American thoroughbred was then renowned to be the most expensive young show jumper ever to have left the States.

Philco's greatest contribution to British show jumping came in 1978 when Broome rode him to win a team gold medal at the 1978 World Championships in Aachen. Broome had the best British score in the three rounds which decided the team title to share a famous victory with his three team-mates, the late Caroline Bradley, Malcolm Pyrah and Derek Ricketts.

The previous year, Philco had won the King George V

Gold Cup, giving Broome the fourth of his six victories in this annual classic. He was also on the silver medal team in the 1977 European Championships.

Philco was given early retirement in 1983 because of heart problems. Since then, "The Arrogant Yank" (as Broome affectionately called his snooty grey partner) has led a cosseted life in Wales where he was turned out in the fields each day.

— Genevieve Murphy

TODAY'S
NUMBER

103bn

The operating costs in yen (¥490m) of the Winter Olympics in Nagano – up from the original estimate of ¥76bn.

TENNIS

Rusedski overwhelms his old friend

Greg Rusedski joined Tim Henman in the quarter-finals of the Qatar Open last night. Rusedski defeated Karim Alami, of Morocco, in straight sets on a cool but calm evening. John Roberts reports from Doha.

They won the Wimbledon junior doubles title together seven years ago, but time has widened a gap in power between Greg Rusedski and Karim Alami. It was on the centre court at the Khalifa Tennis Complex here in 1994 that the Moroccan embarrassed an unprepared Pete Sampras in the first round of the Qatar Open, but Rusedski was too strong for his old friend last night.

The Canadian-born Briton, seeded No 1 in the absence of the injured Yevgeny Kafelnikov, secured his place in the quarter-finals with a 6-2, 7-5 victory and now plays the Frenchman Fabrice Santoro, ranked No 29 in the world, who beat Germany's Martin Sinner 6-3, 6-4.

Rusedski opened with an ace and then lost his serve, missing a forehand over the baseline and missing with a backhand volley. Alami produced a winning serve on the first point of the second game, only to lapse into errors under pressure from Rusedski's serves. The Briton was able to recover the break with a backhand drive.

From that point, Rusedski took control of the opening set. Although unable to convert either of two break points in the fourth game, finding the net with a forehand volley and a backhand drive, he punished Alami sorely in the sixth game, breaking to love.

Rusedski also won the next four points, the confidence of his shots unnerving Alami, who lost his serve again in the eighth game. The Moroccan double-faulted to present the set point at 30-40 and then underplayed a backhand drop shot, which floated into the net.

A set to the good after only 28 minutes, Rusedski lapsed in the opening game of the second set to allow his opponent a break point, created with a forehand drive down the line.

Rusedski erased it with a smash. Alami had treatment to a leg injury during the changeover at 4-3, but continued to match Rusedski point for point until the 12th game. The Moroccan seemed perplexed when the umpire called 30-30, querying whether he meant 40-15. But his shot was clearly long. Rusedski then reached match point with a backhand down the line, the net cord helping another backhand secure his place in the last eight.

Goran Ivanisevic's running feud with the Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman, may reach a new pitch - a football pitch. The reason why Ivanisevic is so keen to turn out for his home-town team, Hajduk Split, against Croatia Zagreb next month goes deeper than a boyhood dream. Tudjman is the Zagreb club's patron.

Tudjman's sporting interests also extend to tennis, and he has expressed opposition to the ATP Tour event in Zagreb being moved to Split. The row led to Ivanisevic's refusal to play in Croatia's Davis Cup tie against Finland. He plans to play in the Dubai Open the same week and, if he loses before the semi-finals on 14 February, to turn out for the last 10 minutes for Hajduk Split.

If Ivanisevic inspires as much emotion on the football pitch as he does on the tennis court, there could be a few sore heads. Such was the tension generated by his epic second-round victory on Wednesday over Switzerland's Marc Rosset, who lost after double-faulting four times when serving for the match at 5-3 in the second set, that a linesman had to run for cover.

A middle-aged Swiss spectator decided to take his frustration out on the judge by attacking him with a flag. "No action will be taken," the tournament director, Ayman Azmy, said. "It's not such a big deal. The guy was carrying a Swiss flag and was a little bit upset with a call. It was funny a little bit. He was looking for Marc Rosset to win, but nobody can do everything."

"What happened was outside the court and nothing to do with the play. If the guy likes to sue him, he can sue him. It's not a big issue. It has never happened to us here before." Where Ivanisevic is concerned, there is a first time for everything.



Cedric Pioline, of France, stretches to reach a backhand during his victory against Jonathan Stark, of the United States, during the Hopman Cup in Perth, Australia yesterday. Pioline won the match 6-4, 6-3. Photograph: AP

Seles withdraws from Australian Open

Monica Seles yesterday withdrew from the Australian Open and the tournament director, Paul McNamee, was unable to shed any light on the reason why.

Seles, 24, has pulled out of the year's first Grand Slam event - a tournament she has won four times - because of "personal reasons", but McNamee could not confirm whether her absence is connected to the health of her father and coach, Karol, who has been suffering from stomach cancer.

"I don't want to speculate," McNamee said. "But I am disappointed that Monica won't be playing. She's a four-time former champion and a great friend of the tournament and Australia. She's never lost a singles match in Australia."

Seles' absence means she joins Steffi Graf in missing the tournament, which starts in Melbourne on 19 January. Mary Joe Fernandez, a former runner-up, has also ruled herself out.

The men's competition will also be missing a key player after Yevgeny Kafelnikov withdrew with a knee injury. The Russian will miss the tournament for the second successive year.

Andre Agassi progressed with ease in the traditional warm-up event for Melbourne, beating Jan Siemerink, 6-4, 6-3 in the Australian men's hardcourt championships yesterday. Agassi, who struggled for form and fitness in 1997 as his ranking plummeted to 140 late in the year, said he was pleased with his performance. "The match needed me to be sharp

early in the point and I was," he said. "I honestly feel every time I'm on the court it's a success to get through the match."

New Zealand's Brett Steven earned a third-round meeting with Agassi after beating the No 2 seed and French Open champion, Gustavo Kuerten, 6-3, 6-3. Another seed, Sweden's Magnus Norman, was forced to retire from his match against Jerome Golmard after twisting his ankle in the third set. As a precaution, he was taken to hospital for X-rays.

SAILING

Dalton steals lead in fight to finish

New Zealand awoke yesterday to a grandstand finish unfolding over 75 nail-biting miles as four boats fought to win the fourth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race.

As the 1,270-mile leg from Sydney drew to a close, Auckland's Grant Dalton was hanging on to a two-mile lead as Merit Cup headed for his home port. Dennis Conner, however, was just behind on Toshiba, while Paul Cayard (EF Language) was coming up fast on the outside and George Collins (Chessie Racing) was looking for a path through on the inside.

Dalton had been there before. In the last Whitbread he engineered a last-gasp win into the City of Sails, pipping fellow New Zealander Chris Dickson by two minutes 12 seconds.

The leading boats had been locked in a 24-hour, non-stop struggle for vital points and places after the weather gods turned off the fan right at the northern tip of New Zealand.

All the scrambling for advantage that had gone before was thrown into the melting pot as the fleet leaders compressed and began a 200-mile dash down the east coast of New Zealand. The first to suffer was the skipper who had established what looked like a reassuring lead,

Gunnar Krantz in Swedish Match could only watch as he ran into a calm spot off Cape Reinga while Conner held the breeze to sail through. Conner's thrill was short-lived as Dalton and Collins crept past him.

"This afternoon, as we approached North Cape, the wind died everywhere except right on the beach," Cayard said. "Merit Cup did a nice job of recognising this and she and Chessie cut inshore and passed a floundering Swedish Match and Toshiba. We followed Chessie and Merit, passing Match and closing on the pack."

All night, full crews were on deck as watch schedules were thrown overboard in the relentless battle for advantage. "We have everyone on the weather rail, all the sails are stacked on the deck and all clothing and other equipment has been stowed on the weather bunks," Dalton said. "We are taking nothing for granted. We have a real fight on our hands and we are giving it everything we have."

Knut Frostad, who is second overall on Innovation Kvaerner, was resigned to a low-order finish. "We tried hard, but have to admit that this time we didn't get it right," he said.

— Samir Alexander Auckland

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Now back to the basics for Borough on Wembley trail

After such a hectic week, Stevenage Borough's players and fans could be forgiven for forgetting the fact that tomorrow they have a match in a competition in which they have a realistic chance of reaching Wembley.

That is not the case in the FA Cup, in which the Hertfordshire club are looking forward to a fourth-round tie against mighty Newcastle United after last weekend's heroic win at Swindon Town. Tomorrow, though, they will be the clear favourites when they entertain Chesham United in the first round of the FA Umbro Trophy.

The Buckinghamshire side are, it is believed, unlikely to complain about the facilities on offer at Stevenage's Broadhall Way ground. Instead, they will be concentrating on business on the pitch. They have drawn 10 of their 22 games to date in the Ryman League Premier Division, and they would probably be very pleased with another level scoreline tomorrow and a replay against their GM Vauxhall Conference opponents at The Meadow next Wednesday.

Elsewhere, Hereford United face their first Trophy tie since a 1-0 home defeat to Dartford in a third-round encounter in 1972. They entertain Dulwich Hamlet at Edgar Street and, like Stevenage, have the distractions of the FA Cup to cope with. The Bulls play host to Tamworth Rovers in a delayed third-round tie on Tuesday.

The other Conference side left in the FA Cup, Cheltenham Town, have a tricky Trophy trip to Enfield tomorrow before they can turn their attentions to their Cup game against Reading at Whaddon Road on Tuesday.

Woking, the Trophy holders, have a home tie against Margate, who have a second chance this season of a big upset, following their narrow defeat to Fulham in the first round of the FA Cup. Dagenham & Redbridge, last season's beaten finalists, have an Essex derby against Billericay Town at Victoria Road, Halifax Town, the Conference leaders, entertain John Burridge's Blyth Spartans at The Shay.

There will be no Wembley glory for Emley this season. The UniBond League side, who gave West Ham a fright last weekend before going down 2-1 in a third-round Cup tie at Upton Park, have already been knocked out of the Trophy. Weather permitting, tomorrow they meet Accrington Stanley in a league fixture, with television cameras probably not present.

— Rupert Metcalf

CRICKET

Hussain finds some personal calm amid the storm

England departed from a soggy Antigua yesterday hoping for some friendlier weather in Jamaica, although showers have been prevalent there as well. But due to a packed flight from the island, all the players had to leave behind their playing gear, which will be flown out this morning in time for their first net session.

However, the England vice-captain, Nasser Hussain, is not

bothered by the lack of practice and insists he has outgrown the desire to achieve personal targets.

Now a secure member of the Test set-up, Hussain is more concerned about England beating the West Indies than accumulating a pile of runs in the coming series. With 500 since his England recall in 1996, the Essex batsman is now no longer

looking over his shoulder at the other middle-order candidates.

"I would like to get 100 in the series because I haven't scored one against the West Indies," he said. "But I have got to the stage where I am trying to get away from personal achievements. My target is to come back to England as a winning side. It's about time we beat one of the major Test playing nations and I think we have a real chance this time."

Hussain toured the Caribbean in 1990, but things did not go to plan. He slipped on a wet tennis court in Guyana and injured his wrist and it was not discovered that a bone had been broken until he returned to England almost two months later.

Hussain did, however, play two innings in Antigua in that series, but did not manage to play a Test on the last tour in 1994, sitting out the entire series while Glamorgan's Matthew Maynard was given the nod. "I have been able to look back on the last couple of years with a lot of positives, although I am still looking to improve," he said.

Further overnight rain ruled out any possibility of completing the tour match at Ruara. Sports Club yesterday, with Kenya struggling on 154 for 8 in reply to England's 402 for 4 declared. But several weeks of storms have left all the grounds in the Nairobi area waterlogged and, after switching tomorrow's match to Ruara from the Gymkhana Club, which resembles a swamp, organisers admitted further rain would wash out this weekend's finale.

SPORTING DIGEST

Basketball

MEANS EURO LEAGUE Second place: Group H (Kilfer) (Fin) 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 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1394, 1395, 1396, 1397, 1398, 1399,

Spurs sign Berti but leave Hinchcliffe in limbo

It was another typical day in the topsy-turvy world of Tottenham Hotspur. Glenn Moore reports on a win some, lose some day spiced with drama and controversy.

Nicola Berti, the Italian midfielder, has joined Spurs on a free transfer from Internazionale, but Andy Hinchcliffe, the England left-back, failed to finalise his £3m move from Everton because of an ankle injury.

Meanwhile, in casualty, Andy Sinton, Ruel Fox and David Howells should be fit to

face Manchester United tomorrow, but David Ginola and Ian Walker are classed as "more than doubtful".

The facts do not reveal the drama behind them. First Berti. It transpires Jürgen Klinsmann, a friend and former team-mate, was intermediary after Berti called, to say that he, too, would rather try and save Spurs (and his World Cup chances) than sit on the bench in Serie A. Klinsmann told Christian Gross, the Spurs coach who, in the light of injuries to Darren Anderson, Alan Nielsen *et al.*, decided Berti was worth signing.

But when he faced the media at 2pm in the press Portak-

abin at Tottenham's training ground, he had no news. Berti, who missed three months with a knee injury last year, was still having a medical that began at 10am. Then an official squeezed through the throng and passed Gross a note. He held it aloft like Neville Chamberlain and announced: "Berti has signed".

Smiles all round, but not at Everton. Spurs, according to Gross, did not sign Hinchcliffe because of an Achilles injury which was only revealed by his agent and brother-in-law when he arrived for the medical. "He wants to sign and I want to buy him," Gross said. "I have a good feeling for him as a player

and a person. We will try and do the deal when he is fit in a few weeks."

Not so, said Everton. Goodison Park insiders claimed another senior Spurs official said the problem was Hinchcliffe's old cruciate ligament injury and the delay was likely to be months rather than weeks. There is a suspicion on Merseyside that this is a ruse to bring the fee down and, as far as Everton are concerned, the deal is now off and other suitors are invited.

Marselles have thwarted Fabrizio Ravanelli's hopes of a return to Italy, in turn scuppering plans of a move for the Sheffield Wednesday duo

Benito Carbone and Patrick Blondeau.

Milan, looking for cover for injured Liberian international George Weah, were hoping to sign the former Middlesbrough striker, but Marselles, who signed Ravanelli for a French record £5m in the summer, have revealed they are not happy with Milan's proposed offer. Roland Courbis, the Marselles coach, said: "Milan made an offer, but it was not precise enough for us, so Ravanelli is staying."

The impasse means that Marselles are now unlikely to chase Carbone and Blondeau, who have been unable to hold down regular places in the Owls'

starting line-up since Ron Atkinson's return.

Tommy Johnson's proposed loan move from Celtic to Crystal Palace could break down on a technicality. The striker has held talks with Steve Coppell, the Palace manager, and is ready to complete a temporary move.

The two clubs initially agreed a six-week loan period, but Coppell has been told Fifa rules prevent it. The world governing body stipulates a three-month minimum on cross-border loan deals and this has caused a potential problem as the additional period would leave Johnson at Selhurst Park beyond the late March transfer deadline.

One player who is going to Selhurst is Carl Leaburn, who has signed for Wimbledon. The Dons are paying £150,000 for the Charlton striker immediately and will add an extra £100,000 after 50 first-team appearances.

Birmingham have signed left-back Simon Charlton from Southampton for £200,000. The former Huddersfield defender has been on loan at St Andrew's for a month, but has now signed a two and a half year contract.

Burnley have signed striker Andy Payton in a £1m swap deal with Huddersfield. Payton is returning to the town he was born in, with Paul Barnes going to Yorkshire in a straight swap.

FA will rule today on Stevenage tie

The Football Association are to make a final ruling today on whether Stevenage Borough are to be allowed to host their FA Cup fourth-round tie against Newcastle after receiving an appeal from the Premiership club.

The FA gave the go-ahead for the match to take place at non-League Stevenage's Broadhall Way stadium following a meeting of safety experts earlier this week.

But Newcastle yesterday complained that the ground, which will have its capacity increased from 6,600 to 8,000 for the televised match on 25 January with temporary seating, is not large enough and have faxed the FA with a detailed complaint. The public row that has broken out between the clubs has marred the build-up to the game and Newcastle's fans have accused their side of going "completely over the top" with their objections.

John Regan, secretary of the Newcastle Independent Supporters' Association, said: "The whole thing has turned into a farce and all this bickering is taking the gloss off the tie for Stevenage. As far as the supporters are concerned, Stevenage were first out of the hat, it is their home tie, they have a safety certificate and that should be that."

In a local poll on Tyneside, 70 per cent of the club's fans backed the Vauxhall Conference side's right to host the tie.

Newcastle announced their intention to appeal against the FA's decision to allow Stevenage to host the match following a visit by their own safety officer to the Hertfordshire ground.

The Premiership club have insisted that "a ground of this size" would be "totally unsuitable bearing in mind the immense interest in the tie and the anticipated level of support from Newcastle fans for this match". Stevenage responded by accusing Newcastle of "Big Brother" tactics.

Meanwhile, Jonathan Brown, chairman of the safety advisory group which took the decision to allow the match to go ahead, maintained that everyone involved in the unanimous decision at Tuesday's meeting knew exactly what they were doing.

Brown said: "We are clearly satisfied that the ground is safe, providing that certain conditions are met. We looked at the issue in depth and it is obviously not something we take lightly. We can assure people that our prime consideration is safety, as is the club's."

Non-League notebook, page 25

SWIMMING

Drug seizure at airport fuels suspicion of Chinese competitors

Customs officers found suspected growth hormones in a bag belonging to a member of the Chinese team arriving in Australia yesterday for the world championships. Ian Gordon reports from Perth.

A Chinese team member's similarity in appearance to a suspected narcotics trafficker yesterday led customs officers at Sydney airport to search baggage in which substances were found that appeared to be growth hormones.

The officials said the suspected growth hormones, banned by the sport's governing body, Fina, were discovered when 29 members of the Chinese team stopped en route to Perth. The hormones were in 13 vials packed in ice in a thermos flask in a bag belonging to an unidentified female team member.

A spokesman for the Australian Customs Service said the vials had not been declared and were clearly labelled in English as "human somatropin", a growth hormone which can be used as a substitute for muscle-building anabolic steroids. "A team coach has said he packed the bag," the spokesman said. The team were released after some members were questioned, and continued their journey.

News of the discovery sparked cries of "told you so"



Waving, not drowning: The Japanese synchronised swimming team on their way to second place at the World Championships Perth, Australia, yesterday

Photograph: Reuters

from those in the sport who had been suspicious of Chinese swimmers' great advances in the sport.

Britain's Performance Director, Deryk Snelling, said: "It does suggest that the suspicions raised by the performances of the Chinese recently had some grounds."

He warned that if they compete, any Chinese victory or

world record would be sneered at. "People are saying that if a Chinese swimmer wins they should be snubbed and everyone should turn their backs when the medal is awarded," he said, suggesting "everyone is going to be accusing them of taking drugs."

The Chinese team leader, Shi Tianshu, declared his athletes "clean" when he arrived here

this week. He also cautioned the Australian team's head coach, Don Talbot, to "get the facts right" before pointing the finger at China following Talbot's publicly expressed doubts about the Chinese team.

Shi said Fina had carried out more than 100 out-of-competition tests on Chinese swimmers in the past two months and none

had proved positive. Chinese officials have also conducted more than 650 tests in the past year.

Seven members of the Chinese team tested positive for steroids before the 1994 Asian Games in Japan, two months after they won 12 of the 16 events at the World Championships in Rome. They swam record times during the Chinese national

games in October, raising suspicions among international competitors.

Other members of the Chinese swimming team were training in Perth when news of the seizure came through and appeared incredulous.

The contents of the vials are yet to be analysed to establish their actual composition and the

result is not expected to be known until today. Although banned by Fina, there is no test to detect the hormones, but customs officials say it is unlikely any team members would be prosecuted even if testing proved the substance to be growth hormones because of the small amount found.

Long-distance man, page 23

RUGBY UNION

English clubs under attack over European boycott

The Celtic nations rounded on England's leading clubs in union yesterday, accusing them of committing all seven deadly sins at once by announcing their boycott of next season's Heineken Cup and European Conference competitions.

But, as Chris Hewett reports, there were clear signs that the red rose recalcitrants would be brought back to the negotiating table.

If nothing else, the decision of the English clubs to tell the organisers of the European Cup to go hang themselves seems certain to add some spice to this season's Five Nations Championship. The Scots and Welsh left their powerful neighbours in no doubt what they thought of them yesterday: greedy, self-serving, arrogant and shortsighted. At times, it sounded like an over-byped shouting match between a pair of Don King boxers.

Terry Cohner, one of the more uncompromising international flankers of his day, was almost apoplectic at the English boycott of next season's Heineken Cup and European Conference tournaments. "They are attempting to put in place a structure that best suits them,

which is no great surprise because hidden agendas have been flying around all over the place in recent weeks," the Welsh Rugby Union's director of rugby said. Meanwhile, Ian Rankin, coach of the Scottish district champions, Caledonia Reds, said: "This has money and personal gain stamped all over it."

None of which will have worried the big-huck owners of England's Premiership clubs one little bit. The decision they took in London on Wednesday night was designed to force the board of European Rugby Cup Ltd to tear up their fixture list, scrap the six-week block-bookings for Heineken and Conference pool matches and switch to a more piecemeal format, possibly based on a football-style programme of midweek Euro matches. There were strong hints yesterday that an early agreement would be reached.

"There will be a meeting of the ERC board in Dublin on 23 January and I am hopeful we can discuss the problems again and find a solution," Alan Meredith, one of the Welsh delegates, said last night.

He was speaking in the knowledge that the English clubs held two trump cards: the reluctance of Heineken and BskyB to pump money into a discredited and, ultimately, meaningless competition and the voices of support flooding across the Channel.

Heineken are in the final year of their initial three-year sponsorship deal and while ex-

tension talks began some time ago, an English withdrawal would almost certainly send the negotiations hurtling towards a brick wall. "We're disappointed that the Heineken Cup is once again being used as a political football, a bargaining chip," a spokesman for the brewing giant said. "If we can arbitrate in any way, we will. This is very serious news."

The French were virtually united in their support of the English initiative. "The English clubs' arguments are reasonable," said Jean-Jacques Madrias, the president of Brive, the reigning champions who defend their title against Bath in Bordeaux in three weeks' time. "In order that this competition remains a proper event, it must involve English and French clubs. Without English clubs, there is no point in having a European Cup."

Seraphin Berthier, who presides over the French elite rugby association CNRE, also sympathised. White Pierre Labourdette, president of Pau, this season's beaten semi-finalists, said: "Basically, the English are right. They want a well-structured championship, as we do in France." However, he detected an element of brinkmanship in the boycott.

"It's no more than a threat. It would surprise me very much if the English clubs withdrew. Among reasonable people, one always manages to find a solution."

Newcastle bottle, page 24

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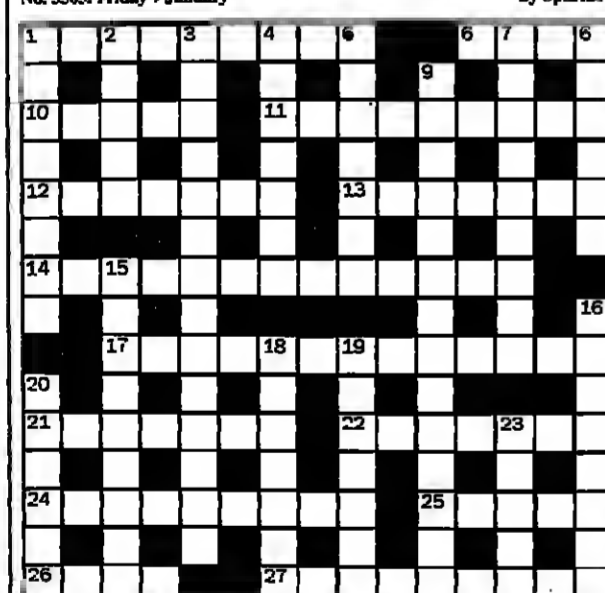
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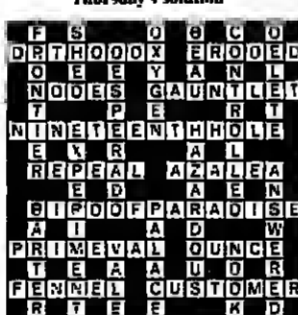
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3503, Friday 9 January

By Spurlins



Thursday's solution



- ACROSS**
- Plant established by park-keeper, we're told? (9)
 - Temporary accommodation could be affected (4)
 - Metallic sound from large article coastguard's taken aboard (5)
 - A nutter furious with Editor, not having been stood a drink? (9)
 - Date for bridge convention (4-3)
 - Boat propeller usually in-board (7)
 - Changes evident in work of classical poet (13)
 - Fletcher? (9, 4)
 - Glass broken by locomotive (7)
 - Very anxious father opposed to opening of crypt (7)
 - Encouraging offer made by charming vet in Nice (9)
 - Irish leaders King Edward annoyed (5)
 - Derry student's got into unmanned railway station (14)
 - Definition you'd find in three parts, notwithstanding? (14)
- DOWN**
- Sort of matchbox mostly used around cast for burnt offering (8)
 - Manned to get into Denmark, and had a Carlberg? (5)
 - Unusually calm reasoning associated with a group of non-Hispanic statesmen (5-9)
 - Relative residing in Germany is more grim (7)
 - Early centre of Christianity you'd see going out to China? (7)
 - Painting Maise's about to exhibit - Sagubrush (9)
 - Judo expert in fit of pique? Very nice person (6)
 - Figure required if taxation's to be raised? (14)
 - Modification to channel, it's strictly required by the regulations (9)
 - In which to keep gunpowder dry? (3-5)
 - Type that is seen wearing bifocals, for instance (7)
 - One northern area where men are sometimes silly (7)
 - Teasingly mischievous independent politician is last to laugh (6)
 - Watch reportedly found in oriental dish (5)

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